

SC067810

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is privately owned and provides care for up to seven children with social and emotional difficulties.

The home was registered with Ofsted in 2006 and the manager registered in 2017. The registered manager is suitably qualified and also manages another children's home in the organisation.

At the time of this inspection, four children were living at the home. Three children contributed their views to the inspection.

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 February 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 28 February 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/02/2023	Full	Good
04/08/2021	Full	Good
26/06/2019	Full	Good
05/03/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Overall, children have a positive experience living in this home. Children are able to express themselves with staff members and each other and their likes and dislikes are well known. As a result, children's personalities are well established and their identity is encouraged.

There is an atmosphere of fun and joviality in the home. Children were observed to move freely through the home and laugh and play with staff. Children know their personalities are respected and understood. This creates an ease of communication between staff and children that is rich and vibrant. This is one of the strengths of this home.

Children's educational and health needs are promoted. They benefit from improved educational outcomes, and from staff advocating for them when they experience challenges to learning and adapting to the school environment. Staff have supported children with the use of tutors when they are not in education.

Key-worker sessions are detailed and bespoke to children's needs. Children are given achievable targets, which are monitored and reviewed regularly. Children are involved in the process of determining which targets will be set and are rewarded for the progress they make. These sessions have been instrumental in developing another forum for learning, which has resulted in improved behaviour and understanding by the children. The attention to children's needs within key-worker sessions is a huge strength of this home and contributes to the steady progress children make.

Children are encouraged to develop appropriate life skills. Children were observed to make small meals for themselves and do this confidently. Staff provide support if required.

Children engage in a wide range of activities that they enjoy. Staff make efforts to expand the children's social horizons and support them when they feel anxious in trying new activities. Consequently, children's social skills and social interactions are developed and they are able to feel at ease in a variety of social situations. Children are able to form relationships with their peer groups and appropriate adults. This supports them in developing relationship skills that will benefit them in adulthood.

Staff understand the individual needs of the children and are patient and understanding towards them. Staff understand the importance of family time and are proactive in encouraging this when it is required. For example, staff promoted video calls between siblings when they could see that this was necessary for the overall well-being of the children. This was arranged without the local authority requesting it, and was appropriate to the needs of the children involved.

Children benefit from in-house therapeutic support, and have requested more sessions with the therapist. The intervention of the therapist has led to marked progress in children's ability to express their wishes and feelings in positive ways. This has resulted in calmer, more relaxed interactions within the home and children learning skills to regulate their own behaviour and thoughts.

While children's overall experiences and progress are positive, more thought could be given to improving the recreation spaces within and outside the home. For instance, the back garden is overgrown and appears neglected and the children's games room appears cluttered. Children would benefit from bespoke spaces where their individual self-expression is allowed to flourish even further. The home, although comfortable, would also benefit from updating to provide a more modern, child-friendly environment.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

The registered manager and staff team understand how to keep children safe. This is reflected in comprehensive, individualised risk assessments that guide staff to support children effectively. In particular, risk assessments for children at risk of criminal exploitation and sexual exploitation are effective in identifying triggers and behaviours that may confirm these activities are taking place. Coupled with policies and key-worker sessions, the risk assessments help to support staff to keep children safe.

Missing-from-home episodes have significantly reduced. The use of disruption and distraction techniques has been effective in encouraging children not to go missing. The primary factor in this reduction is the relationships staff have built with children, which are trusting and stable. Children willingly return home and their whereabouts are generally known.

When incidents occur, staff use de-escalation techniques effectively, helping children to feel supported when they are distressed. Recording of incidents is detailed and debriefs following incidents are reflective and lead to improvement in practice. The registered manager models effective intervention with children when they are distressed and this filters through the staff team. Staff are effective in supporting children and use their relationships with children when challenging events occur. As a result, the use of restraint and physical intervention is low in this home. One child said, 'No matter what I do, they don't reject me or ask me to leave.'

Another strength of this home is supporting children with developing positive behaviours. The rewards and restorative approach to behaviour that is challenging is very effective in equipping children with the ability to express themselves in more positive ways. Behaviour support plans are effective in enabling staff to understand children's behaviours and the support they need. Children participate in the development of plans, which leads to greater understanding of their needs and behaviours.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers know the children well and advocate for them. This is a major strength of this home. Leaders and managers are effective when liaising with partner agencies to ensure that children's needs are met. The registered manager is experienced and children benefit from her approachability and warmth, an approach that reverberates throughout the staff team. Consequently, a family atmosphere is created in the home. This promotes children's stability and sense of belonging. Staff reported feeling supported by leaders and managers and enjoy working at the home. They said that they are supported to gain new skills and experience and that the registered manager is ambitious for them and the children.

Inductions for new staff are detailed and training provided is specific to the needs of the children. The training and induction programme is detailed and comprehensive. Staff benefit from training updates, which ensures that they are aware of new developments in practice.

Staff receive regular and effective supervision sessions which focus on children's needs, experiences and plans. Safeguarding issues are discussed, as well as staff development needs. This demonstrates effective management oversight of staff practice and development, and the progress children are making.

Staff appraisals are detailed and support professional development appropriately. However, the workforce development plan requires improvement to ensure that the management and staffing structure is clear, the supervisory process is well evidenced and new training and skills of the staff team are included.

The assessment process for new children moving into the home is effective. Assessments are robust and take into account information about children, their needs and other children already living in the home. This has led to improved placement stability and a reduction in unplanned endings. While it is noted that a recent placement breakdown took place, it is evident that appropriate assessment process is applied, and that the registered manager is able to assess risks and be honest about the home's ability to keep children safe if the risks are too high. In this instance, the decision to end the placement was appropriate.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child; and enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(i)(ii)) In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that the recreational areas, the games room and the garden are uncluttered and furnished according to the children's wishes and promote the safety and well-being of children.	29 July 2024

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that the workforce development plan complies with the requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20). In particular, the plan should detail the management staffing structure, evidence the qualifications and training of staff, detail the process of managing staff performance and detail the process and timescales for supervision sessions. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)

Information about this inspection

The inspector has looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, using the social care common inspection framework. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC067810

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Herman Allen

Registered manager: Michelle Nicholson

Inspector

Angela Reid, Social Care Inspector

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