

SC366343

Registered provider: Maple Leaf Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a private company. The home provides care for up to four children who may have social and emotional difficulties.

At the time of the inspection, four children were living in the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in October 2015.

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 February 2024

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 16 August 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16/08/2022	Full	Good
09/02/2022	Full	Outstanding
16/01/2020	Full	Outstanding
23/10/2018	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children living in the home make significant progress in all aspects of their lives. The progress they have achieved is underpinned by the consistent, child-centred and nurturing care they receive from an established staff team. Staff work hard to get to know the children and build excellent relationships with them. Owing to these solid foundations, many children remain in touch with staff long after they have moved on from the home, with staff offering emotional and practical support where possible. Children who come to live in the home experience planned moves that are managed sensitively. Three children have moved on to alternative accommodation in line with their individual care plans, and two children have returned to live with family. Where children have moved from the home in an unplanned way, staff have offered them a high level of support to enable them to have a positive ending to their time living in the home.

Staff have high aspirations for children and support them with their education. Staff communicate effectively with children's schools and alternative educational provisions. As a result, barriers to learning are quickly identified and resolved. The manager is a strong advocate and has ensured that children currently living in the home are engaged in education that meets their level of need. This is significant progress for some of the children whose previous education attendance was extremely poor.

Children are in good health, and staff understand children's individual health needs well. Children are encouraged by staff to attend all health appointments, as necessary. The home has excellent links with the local authority specialist nurse, who visits the home regularly and reviews the health needs of children.

The registered manager continually uses research-informed practice to improve the care provided to children. During a recent training session on trauma-informed practice, staff were encouraged to understand how children's previous experiences can affect their current behaviour and how they can effectively provide support for children's emotional well-being.

Staff nurture children's relationships with their families and friends. This includes facilitating children's time with their family and providing them with regular updates. This helps children to maintain important relationships and further develop their networks for the future.

Staff model behaviour to the children that is respectful and nurturing and has an emphasis on developing trusting relationships. Consequently, children are invested in making the home a positive place to live.

Children's independence skills are actively promoted by staff. The home has developed an independence programme, which children are supported to work

through at their own pace to ensure that they feel confident and prepared when they are able to live independently.

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

Children say that they feel safe in the home. Children enjoy trusting relationships with staff and know they can approach staff with any concerns. Staff work with children to help them understand their individual risks and vulnerabilities. As a result, children are making safer choices.

Children's risk assessment plans are individualised and include details of current and previously experienced risks, with clear strategies for staff to follow. These plans are regularly reviewed and updated when the risks change. Staff are proactive in their response to any emerging risks and engage the children in focused direct-work sessions to promote positive behaviours.

Staff support children to develop their understanding of their past experiences. Staff work closely with children's mental health services to ensure there is a whole-team approach to helping children work through their trauma. Children are supported to regulate their emotions, and staff are skilled at preventing incidents from escalating. As a result, there have not been any incidents of children needing to be held to keep them safe.

Clear protocols are in place in the event of a child being missing from home. These are followed consistently by staff and ensure that children return to the home as quickly and safely as possible. Children are offered the opportunity to speak to an independent person on their return to the home, which enables staff to develop their understanding of the reasons why children have been missing. For one child, where missing-from-home incidents were increasing, the manager has actively engaged with the child, their parent and professionals to develop an agreed plan that allows the child to meet with friends who are not local to the area. Specific and focused key-work sessions have been completed to ensure risks are minimised and a clear plan developed. As a result, incidents of missing from home are reducing.

The manager completes a detailed risk assessment before children move into the home. However, the presenting behaviours of two children who moved into the home were significant and not reflective of information that had been shared with the registered manager by the placing local authority. The registered manager ensured that significant support was put in place for the children while specialist provisions were identified. This included emergency waking night staff to ensure children were supported effectively. Consequently, the manager has further developed her referral and admission procedures to now include direct liaison with specific professionals involved with the child. This is to ensure that staff are fully aware of and able to effectively support children's specific needs.

On one occasion, Ofsted was not notified of a serious incident. Staff responded to the incident appropriately and supported the child throughout. The manager and

responsible individual accept this was an oversight and have been proactive in ensuring the staff are fully aware of when notifications should be made.

An independent person visits the home regularly. On occasions, family members state that their experience of working with the home has been very positive. However, the independent person does not regularly source this feedback. This would strengthen the report.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders and managers have an excellent understanding of children's needs and are committed to improving outcomes for children. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the support they receive from the registered manager and senior staff team and are proud to work in the home.

Staff report that both the registered manager and responsible individual are visible and approachable, and they have developed a culture of high aspirations and ambition. Staff retention has ensured children experience consistent care. The registered manager and staff team are creative and work together to understand children's changing needs. The manager leads by example and has consistently high expectations. This ensures that staff have a clear sense of purpose and direction.

The home has excellent working relationships with children's families and partner agencies. Professionals who are involved with the children currently living in the home are complimentary about the standard of care. A social worker said, 'This is one of the best homes I have worked with. Staff are really flexible and engaging.' Family members also stated that their experience of dealing with the home has been positive, with one family member advising that 'the staff really care' and 'couldn't do more' for their child.

Staff have regular supervision sessions with their manager. Records of supervision sessions show that staff are actively encouraged to develop their practice, and action plans identify areas for ongoing professional development. New staff are provided with a clear induction programme.

Team meetings take place on a regular basis. They are well attended, and staff are engaged in the process. Ideas are shared, specifically when looking to improve the outcomes for children. Staff's views are valued by the manager.

Staff access a range of training that supports them to develop their skills in caring for the children. Additional training is sourced by the manager specific to individual children's needs and where gaps in staff knowledge have been identified. The manager actively reviews the training completed by staff and is proactive in identifying further training opportunities, including delivering 'bite size' training sessions. These are subject-focused, and staff are encouraged to reflect on how these are relevant to the needs of individual children in the home.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home. This should include regular, independently sourced feedback from children, family members and professionals. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- The registered person should ensure that Ofsted is notified of any serious incidents. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 63, paragraph 14.10)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have 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: SC366343

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Maple Leaf Care Limited

Registered provider address: 16a Regent Road, Altrincham, Cheshire WA14 1RP

Responsible individual: Nicola Higham

Registered manager: Susan Murfitt

Inspector

Carrie Mayes, Social Care Inspector

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