

SC369825

Registered provider: Stoke on Trent City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is run by a local authority. It provides care for up to 2 children with social and emotional difficulties.

The manager is suitably qualified and registered with Ofsted in March 2023.

At the time of the inspection, 2 children were living in the home, and both spoke with the inspector.

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 March 2026

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 21 January 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/01/2025	Full	Good
05/12/2023	Full	Good
17/05/2022	Full	Good
05/10/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last inspection, one child has moved into the home, and one child has moved on to live independently in the local area. Both moves were well planned and tailored to each child's individual needs and circumstances. Children are supported to stay in contact with staff if they choose to, which reflects the staff's commitment to maintaining positive relationships with them over the long term.

The home is warm, homely and child focused. One child proudly showed their bedroom and described how staff had personalised it to reflect their taste. In the garden, there is a decking area that a child helped to build, which has supported their confidence and self-esteem. Overall, the home is comfortable; however, some improvements are needed to meet the high standards expected by leaders. The registered manager has already identified that a new bath is required and took action to address this before the inspection.

Progress in education is mixed. One child has returned to school after a significant period away from learning, which represents positive progress. Where challenges arise, managers and staff respond proactively. For example, staff support children to develop vocational skills, helping to build their confidence and sense of achievement. Personal education plans and education, health and care plans are reviewed as required. Although there has been some inconsistency in the timeliness of the post-16 personal education plan review for one child, leaders have identified this and are taking action to address it. This delay has not affected the child's education or overall progress.

Staff support children to maintain relationships with people who are important to them. Managers advocate on children's behalf to increase family time where this is appropriate and in their best interests. Staff also work with family members to help them consider therapeutic perspectives, which supports the development of stronger and more stable relationships. This helps children to feel understood by the adults around them and reassured by the consistent responses they receive.

Children are encouraged to follow their hobbies and interests. One child enjoys fishing with a member of staff at a local fishing club and has taken part in competitions, achieving notable success. Another child attends local football coaching and has travelled with staff to football matches, including a recent trip to Scotland. These opportunities support children's sense of identity and enhance their wellbeing and social connections.

Children's health needs are well met by the staff team. One child has made impressive progress, with a previously significant medical condition now fully resolved since moving into the home. Another child has an ongoing medical condition that staff manage effectively. However, guidance about this is not included in the child's independent living plan to help them develop greater responsibility for age-appropriate health tasks.

Although referrals to specialist services have been made, these now require timely progression to ensure children receive the support they need without delay.

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

When children go missing from home, managers and staff respond robustly. Incidents are managed and recorded well, and staff demonstrate a clear understanding of the agreed safety plans to keep children safe. Each incident is analysed and monitored within a theoretical framework, which informs staff learning and guides their responses. This reflective approach ensures that children have bespoke, individualised plans that are reviewed and updated dynamically in line with their changing needs.

Children say that they feel safe because staff and leaders know them well. One child prefers to attend their statutory meetings with staff members they trust and who understand them. This reflects the child's confidence that they are listened to and that their views will be represented in important decisions about their life, plans and safety.

Multi-agency working is strong. Staff and managers collaborate proactively with external professionals, sharing information effectively to develop coordinated plans and responses. Managers demonstrate an informed and proactive approach, ensuring that specialist services are commissioned when needed to support each child. During the inspection, one child had a visitor from a specialist service following a recent period of challenges and increased risk-taking behaviours. This responsive approach helps to ensure that children receive timely and appropriate support.

When children make allegations, managers and staff respond swiftly, ensuring that safeguarding procedures and protocols are followed throughout. During the period of investigation, interim safety plans and measures are put in place to reduce risk and keep children safe.

When children display behaviours that are difficult to manage, staff respond calmly and consistently. They only use physical intervention when it is absolutely necessary, and then it is proportionate. Managers and staff follow all agreed protocols and behaviour support plans. One child has co-produced an individualised reduction plan that identifies their triggers and preferred calming strategies, demonstrating that they feel involved and listened to. Managers can evidence a significant reduction in physical interventions, indicating the child's improved ability to regulate and the staff's effective responses.

Children attend highly personalised, empathetic and child-led sessions with staff and managers on a range of topics that help keep them safe and healthy. These sessions cover areas such as staying safe, building positive relationships and friendships, and understanding the risks associated with substance misuse. Staff are supported to deliver this bespoke, therapeutic care through monthly consultations with a team of clinicians.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager has embedded a strong culture of reflective and analytical practice following safeguarding incidents. This work is underpinned by sound theoretical understanding and the systematic use of measurable data to demonstrate progress. Analysis and tracking of key incidents take place continuously, enabling leaders to identify patterns and use these insights to shape staff training, supervision and children's plans. This highly effective, evidence-based approach has led to clear and sustained reductions in children's risk-taking behaviours.

Leadership is innovative and consistently child focused. Children's needs are prioritised to an exceptional standard, and this demonstrates clearly that they are valued and respected. Children speak highly of their relationships with leaders and staff, describing the meaningful support they receive. The manager has creatively redesigned children's records to provide a child-centred, memory-based account of their experiences. This innovation has been recognised as good practice and adopted by other homes within the organisation, extending the positive impact of the manager's leadership beyond this setting.

The management team is highly experienced, and members share a strong, unified commitment to the children and to the staff team. The culture and ethos in the home are deeply therapeutic, empathetic and consistently child focused, creating a safe and nurturing base where children feel secure. Leaders and staff demonstrate exceptional commitment by supporting children to achieve their goals and take part in a wide range of opportunities. They also empower children to shape and influence their own lives, reflecting a culture of high aspiration and genuine respect for children's views.

When children struggle with their emotions, managers and staff respond exceptionally well, using a restorative approach that prioritises relationships. Children are meaningfully involved in co-producing plans to support their self-regulation and reduce risks, helping them to feel empowered and listened to. Managers seek insight from the wider therapeutic network to further strengthen their approach. One professional described the home's relational practice as its greatest strength, noting that it promotes creativity and optimism across the team.

Leaders maintain robust internal oversight supported by effective systems that give them a clear and accurate understanding of practice. They recognise that external monitoring does not always fully reflect children's views and have already taken action to strengthen these arrangements. Children's feedback is gathered in a variety of meaningful ways, including meetings and child-friendly resources. This is further demonstrated through the ongoing, close and relationship-based approach between leaders, staff and children. As a result, children feel listened to, understood and central to the running of the home.

Staff turnover is low, and staff describe the manager as extremely supportive, noting that he is 'really supportive to the young people and he's always there for you'. Team meetings are highly reflective and consistently focus on children's needs, ensuring clear

links between children's experiences and staff practice. All staff are well trained and hold the relevant qualifications. Specialist training is provided to meet the individual needs of each child, ensuring that staff are equipped with the skills and knowledge required to keep children safe.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should support children to keep and take their own medication if they are safely able to do so. In particular, the registered person should work with children and external professionals to help children develop an understanding of their medication and how to safely store and administer it for themselves in line with their age and ability. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 35, paragraph, 7.16)
- The registered person should ensure that that home is a homely, domestic environment. In particular, the registered person should ensure that all areas of the home are updated, specifically the bathroom, and appear as more inviting and appealing to reflect the quality of accommodation that is expected from providers of high-quality care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 15, paragraph, 3.9)

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: SC369825

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Stoke on Trent City Council

Registered provider address: Civic Centre glebe Street, Floor 2, Stoke on Trent ST4 1HH

Responsible individual: Tracey Dawson

Registered manager: Daniel Barker

Inspector

Gill Rudkin, Social Care Inspector

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