

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 is registered to care for up to two children with social and/or emotional difficulties.

There is currently no registered manager at the home.

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 May 2022

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	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 5 October 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/10/2021	Full	Good
26/06/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
03/07/2018	Full	Good
27/02/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Two children currently live in the home. Since the last inspection in October 2021, one child has moved out and one child has moved into the home. Staff plan children's transitions well to ensure that children have positive experiences of moving into and out of the home.

Staff value children's education. When children struggle at school, staff provide them with good support. As a result, children's attendance is good. Managers and staff have regular communication with children's educational professionals to promote children's learning.

Managers have put in place detailed care plans that provide staff with essential information. Staff use these documents to review children's progress in all aspects of their care. However, staff are not supporting children to read and contribute to their care plans. This shortfall can prevent children from meaningfully engaging with their care.

Staff encourage children to attend activities and keep themselves busy. One child enjoys fishing and is skilled at it, and this is supported by the staff team. Staff try their best to offer children experiences that will help them develop socially and grow in confidence.

Staff work in partnership with children's social workers and families. Staff help children to maintain important relationships by promoting and supporting family time. One child's parent told the inspector that staff spend time with him, have been a great support to her son and herself and that staff are always available.

Currently, children do not have independence plans in place to help them develop the necessary skills for adult life. This is an area that the new manager is aware of and has plans to address.

Children have personalised their bedrooms. The home environment is clean, tidy and welcoming. There are some areas that require further redecoration; however, this is in process.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

The two children living in the home do not always get along with one another. Regular key-work sessions between children and staff have not focused on promoting healthy relationships and behaviours. As a result, there is sometimes tension in the home. In addition, staff do not record low-level bullying.

Staff reward children for their achievements and positive behaviours. Both children have incentive plans in place that help children learn to make positive choices. However, these are not regularly reviewed and amended to promote further progress. When necessary, staff will impose sanctions on children. However, the managers have not reviewed the effectiveness of these sanctions to assure themselves that they are appropriate. As a result, sanctions put in place do not deter repeated behaviours. On occasion, staff have failed to put in place sanctions when required. This shortfall does not support children to understand the impact of their behaviour.

Staff understand the risks and potential hazards for each child, and, when necessary, take effective action to safeguard children. Risk assessments are in place; however, not all are up to date or accurate. Some risk assessments do not provide staff with sufficient strategies. Due to the staff's good knowledge of the children, this has not yet compromised the safety of children. However, these shortfalls do not ensure that new staff supporting children are adequately informed of how to keep children safe.

Serious incidents rarely occur. Children rarely go missing from the home. On the odd occasion that they do, staff follow the children's missing-from-care protocol. Staff use de-escalation and distraction techniques to help keep children occupied and to reduce the need for physical interventions.

The managers have ensured that new staff working at the home are safely recruited. All relevant checks have been made before new staff start their employment. This means that staff have been suitably vetted to work with children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Since the last inspection, the registered manager has resigned. A new manager has recently commenced in post and together with the assistant manager they lead a small, dedicated staff team. Staff enjoy their job and speak well of the management team.

Staff report that they feel supported by the new manager. Staff receive regular supervision and have access to monthly team meetings and reflective practice sessions, which provides the opportunity for staff to reflect on children's needs and practice issues. Newly recruited staff are provided with a thorough induction and probation process that helps them to understand their roles and the children they care for.

There is a comprehensive range of training available to staff and most staff have completed key training for their roles. This means that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to care safely for the children. One member of staff has not obtained the required residential childcare qualification within the required time frame.

Despite the restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, managers have worked hard to ensure that the home is safely staffed. On occasion, staff work additional

shifts or staff from other homes cover shifts to ensure that the needs of children can be met.

Managers work positively with professionals and communication is good. One social worker told the inspector that 'staff have a very good understanding of [name of child's] additional needs and support and encourage him to build on his independence skills. He is offered lots of emotional warmth, which he thrives on.'

Despite the shortfalls identified, staff are providing good care to children and children benefit from living at the home. The new manager is aware of areas that can improve and has plans in place to address them.

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, 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 positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— strive to gain each child's respect and trust; that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(xiii)(b)) This specifically relates to ensuring that staff support children to form positive relationships with other children living in the home.	29 July 2022
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child;	29 July 2022

help each child to understand how to keep safe. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)) This specifically relates to the registered provider ensuring that risk assessments are up to date and provide staff with effective strategies to help children. In addition, the registered provider should ensure that staff complete work with children to help them understand and reduce their risk.	
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that — the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform. For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained— the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma. The relevant date is— in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home; or in the case of an individual who was working in a care role in a home on 1st April 2014, 1st April 2016.	29 July 2022

(Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(b) (4)(a)(b) (5)(a)(b)) This specifically relates to the registered provider ensuring that all staff have completed the relevant qualification in residential childcare.	
The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so (“the authorised person”)— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(vii) (b)(i)(ii)) This specifically relates to ensuring that the effectiveness of any sanction is reviewed within the required time frames.	29 July 2022

Recommendations

- The registered provider should ensure that staff help children prepare for moving on from the home. This should include preparing children to develop essential independence skills to prepare them emotionally and practically, including self-care. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 16, paragraph 3.27)
- The registered provider should ensure that there is a system in place to record, intervene and address bullying behaviours effectively. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 38, paragraph 8.16)
- The registered provider should ensure that staff encourage children to view and contribute to their records in a way that reflects their voice. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 58, paragraph 11.19)

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: City Of Stoke-on-Trent

Registered provider address: Swann House, Boothern Road, Stoke-on-Trent,
Staffordshire ST4 4SY

Responsible individual: Tracey Docksey

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Debbie Holder, Social Care Inspector

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