

SC369840

Registered provider: Stoke on Trent City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is operated by the local authority and provides care for up to two children who experience social and emotional difficulties.

At the time of this inspection, two children were living at the home.

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

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 September 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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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: 8 July 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/07/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
14/06/2023	Full	Good
21/09/2021	Full	Good
14/01/2020	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

One child was present at the time of the inspection and spoke with the inspector.

The same two children have remained living at the home since the last inspection. They continue to receive highly individualised and therapeutic care, which enables them to make exceptional progress across all aspects of their development, including health, education, and emotional well-being.

Staff and managers consistently use creative, trauma-informed approaches to help children understand and process their past experiences. As a result, children achieve extremely positive outcomes. For example, one child was encouraged to write a story featuring their favourite superheroes. This imaginative exercise enabled them to disclose lived experiences for the first time, sharing information that had never previously emerged, despite years of therapeutic involvement. Insights from this activity have directly informed care planning, parenting strategies and therapeutic interventions. The child now receives the right specialist support for their trauma and is thriving emotionally and psychologically.

Some children have previously struggled with complex health issues, particularly during times of distress. The exceptional dedication and advocacy of staff and managers prompted further health investigations, leading to a new diagnosis. Staff respond with empathy and curiosity, working alongside health professionals to develop targeted support plans. Consequently, there has been a marked reduction in health concerns for children, demonstrating the impact of the home's meticulous, therapeutic care.

Children's educational progress is exceptional. For example, one child arrived at the home with an attendance rate of just 1.7%. Staff explored barriers to learning with determination and persistence, escalating concerns until a suitable education placement was secured. Staff tailored support to the child's interests and used creative incentives, resulting in their attendance improving dramatically. The child now attends college regularly, studying a subject of their choice and taking pride in their achievements.

Staff and managers are extremely committed to promoting children's individuality, aspirations and rights, irrespective of their specific needs or challenges. Children benefit from a wide range of social, cultural and faith-based opportunities. For example, staff's persistent efforts to source a music tutor enabled one child to compose and record a song about their life, which was later published online. Another child, who previously struggled to form safe peer relationships, now actively participates in Scouts and local youth clubs, often without direct staff supervision. These experiences have significantly enhanced children's self-esteem, confidence and sense of belonging.

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

Managers and staff are extremely persistent in their efforts to build trusted relationships with children. They know the children well, listen attentively and spend meaningful time nurturing their relationships. This strong relational practice underpins the home's safeguarding culture. Children told the inspector that they feel safe and can identify which adults they turn to for protection and support.

One child described the most significant change in their life as being able to 'stop damaging property or hurting others'. Instead, they now choose to play football or use coping strategies to regulate their emotions. This illustrates the extraordinary progress children make in emotional regulation, self-control and resilience.

Children are exceptionally well protected through proactive and personalised risk management. Safety plans are clear and detailed, and they are written in child-friendly language. They outline triggers, self-regulation strategies and precise staff responses. Plans are regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain relevant to each child's evolving needs. For example, one child uses a trigger phrase to alert staff when they feel unsafe, and staff respond swiftly to provide support.

Managers and staff use a robust multi-agency approach to ensure that risk management remains dynamic and responsive. Professionals collaborate effectively to review the risks associated with missing-from-home episodes, exploitation and substance misuse. Managers escalate concerns promptly, enabling coordinated and timely responses. As a result, there has been a significant reduction in missing-from-home incidents and risks of exploitation.

Preventative work on substance misuse, online safety and healthy relationships is delivered with empathy and a non-judgemental tone. Although children may sometimes resist, the consistent and reflective approach fosters insight and long-term change. As a result, children are developing the ability to keep themselves safe, express their feelings appropriately and make safer choices. This has also contributed to a sustained reduction in unsafe behaviours and the need for physical interventions.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is led by a highly reflective and inspirational registered manager who sets a clear therapeutic vision. This is complemented by the support of a strong and aspirational deputy manager. Together, they foster a culture of excellence, where professional curiosity, emotional intelligence and child-centred advocacy are embedded in daily practice. This reflective culture ensures that practice remains consistently research informed, adaptive and responsive to emerging needs.

Staff receive exceptional support and training tailored to the needs of the children in their care. Managers use reflective supervision and clinical input to deepen the team's understanding of trauma and attachment. The home's clinical psychologist provides regular reflective sessions that enable staff to respond therapeutically to challenging

behaviours. As a result, children are engaging meaningfully in therapy and education and taking positive risks. For example, one child now attends therapy weekly, while another has significantly reduced behaviours that had previously put them at risk of exploitation. This has made a remarkable and measurable difference to children's lives, enhancing their safety, stability and progress.

Managers monitor practice effectively using a range of comprehensive audits and oversight tools. These systems enable them to maintain a deep understanding of each child's lived experience. Findings from reviews are used constructively to inform care planning and drive continuous improvement. For example, the manager's analysis of a child's superhero story led to multi-agency consultation and the development of new therapeutic strategies tailored to the child's needs. While the home benefits from robust internal monitoring and reflective oversight, the independent visitor's external monitoring would be further enhanced by direct consultation with children to capture their views and experiences of living in the home.

Professionals, parents and children are extremely positive and complimentary about the quality of care, the strong relationships between staff and children, and the significant progress children make as a result. The strong, trusting relationships are central to the home's success and contribute significantly to the exceptional progress and stability children achieve.

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

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that the independent visitor, who visits the home monthly, consults children to ascertain their views and experiences of living in the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.5)

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: SC369840

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 Docksey

Registered manager: Daniel Barker

Inspector

Nateisha Cardoza-Evans, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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