

SC373941

Registered provider: East Sussex County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is operated by a local authority and provides care for up to four children with social and emotional difficulties. At the time of the inspection, there were three children living in the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in March 2022.

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 January 2024

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	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 19 October 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/10/2022	Full	Good
25/05/2021	Full	Good
11/06/2019	Full	Outstanding
01/08/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children appear happy and are making progress. They are cared for by a staff team that has been consistent in its approach, and this has resulted in children having positive and secure relationships with staff.

Children have positive daily experiences. They have access to a variety of activities and all children have a say in what they want to do. Children are encouraged to develop and express their identities and, through education and nurturing care, staff support children on matters such as gender identity and sexual orientation.

External professionals are complimentary about the care and work that staff carry out with children. They said that communication is good, and concerns are swiftly responded to. One social worker said, '[Name of child] has made significant progress since moving into the home.'

Children make good progress in education. Staff have a good understanding of children's individual education needs and advocate well for them to ensure that the most suitable plan is identified. This has resulted in positive outcomes. For instance, some children who have not previously engaged in education are now attending school full time. When there is difficulty with children's engagement in education, staff are consistent in their approach and encourage and support children to access schoolwork in the home, with help from education professionals.

Children's health needs are met well. Staff ensure that children attend routine appointments with medical professionals and are also quick to react to any emerging concerns that may arise through children's behaviour. This forms the basis of medical support and education in areas such as alcohol and drug misuse. For children who have gone missing, their health and well-being are of paramount importance on their return.

Children's views are understood well through a mix of one-to-one work, theory-based sessions, daily recording and children's meetings. Staff are aware that, although children's meetings are available every week, the children cannot consistently sit together to discuss concerns. When this happens, staff are creative in supporting children to voice their views by using different times and methods to capture them. Children consistently receive feedback about the issues they raise and can see the impact of their views being shared.

Children and staff are supported by a wide range of external professionals, including specialists in mental health, sexually harmful behaviours and promoting positive behaviour. This external expertise has supported staff to develop their practices so that they can provide children with the best care possible.

Arrangements for children moving into and on from the home are, in general, well planned. Comprehensive assessments are completed prior to a child moving in. This involves leaders collating relevant information to ensure that they can meet the needs of children. However, leaders made the decision to move a child into the home despite the registered manager not being confident that the child's needs could be fully met. Despite the best efforts of the staff team and registered manager, the child struggled in the home and subsequently moved on.

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

Children's risks in the home are understood by leaders and managers. All children have a series of risk assessments and personal support plans to help staff to fully understand how to care for children and keep them safe. These assessments and plans are regularly reviewed. When there are changes in children's behaviour or concerns emerge or are raised, guidance to staff is immediately updated to ensure that they are working with the most relevant information.

One child has frequently gone missing from the home. Staff consistently follow the child's missing-from-home protocol and do all they can to return the child safely and to reduce the number of incidents. When the child is in the home and not missing, staff encourage them to think about the levels of risk, and actively discourage further instances. Staff also show the child that they worry and care about them. This helps the child to feel valued and welcomed back to the home on their return. The work to reduce and address the missing-from-home incidents remains ongoing.

Physical restraints are used to help support children's behaviour. They are used as a last resort and only when necessary. When restraints occur, they are managed effectively, and staff and children are provided with the opportunity to talk about the incident with someone afterwards. Following a review of the strategies that are in place to support children's behaviour, there has been a reduction in the severity and frequency of restraints for one child. Furthermore, another child, who had a high level of physical restraints prior to moving into the home, now rarely needs supporting in this way.

Although the practice for the use of physical restraint is good, there are some inconsistencies in the restraint records. This is because the information is recorded in two separate places and there are times when information is lacking. This compromises the registered manager's ability to consider all factors relating to the restraint. This lack of clarity could affect the registered manager's oversight of the suitability of and reason for the intervention.

Effective action is taken when allegations regarding staff practice are raised. This includes leaders and managers communicating with relevant external safeguarding professionals in a timely way.

Safer recruitment practice is effective. This includes an extensive interviewing process that incorporates questions from the children. Consequently, leaders and managers ensure that staff working in the home are safe to do so.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The registered manager has high aspirations for the home and is conscientious in her responsibility to ensure that children receive good-quality care. However, decisions made at an organisational level to move the child into the home against the views of the registered manager have compromised this. Although the registered manager was able to lead the staff team to manage the situation, the overall impact of this decision-making has been detrimental.

Leaders have a good understanding of the progress that children make. This is captured through review reports and placement plans.

Staff receive effective supervision that enables them to reflect on some of the challenges that occur in their work. However, on some occasions, the frequency of supervision has fallen outside the organisation's policy. As a result, there have been times when staff have been unable to reflect on the changing needs of the children as they have occurred. Despite this, staff are clear that the registered manager, and experienced deputy managers, are available to them should they be needed. As a result, the staff team has remained consistent for several years and staff said that they feel well supported in their role.

Leaders are clear and realistic about the strengths and weaknesses of the home. The registered manager has good oversight of all activities and monitoring systems in the home. They ensure that any area for development is identified and addressed with clear direction to staff. This has included identifying the need for developing and upskilling the staff team. While there is a wide range of training made available to all staff, and all mandatory training is up to date, not all staff have completed some of the more specialist training. This means that staff do not all have the same level of training to recognise the emerging or changing needs of children.

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 care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a))	30 April 2024
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development. (Regulation 33 (4)(a))	30 April 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that restraint records are detailed and include the behaviour of the child prior to restraint. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)
- The registered person should ensure that all staff receive supervision as indicated by the organisation's policy. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)

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: SC373941

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: East Sussex County Council

Registered provider address: County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1UE

Responsible individual: Kathy Marriott

Registered manager: Georgia Carty

Inspector

Mark Newington, Social Care Inspector

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