

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 two children living in the home.

There has been no manager registered with Ofsted since July 2024

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 January 2025

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: 3 January 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/01/2024	Full	Good
19/10/2022	Full	Good
25/05/2021	Full	Good
11/06/2019	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children benefit from care provided by a stable and experienced staff team. They have a warm and nurturing approach to the care of the children. The children are new to the home and staff have invested time in getting to know them and understanding their needs. They leave notes for children to share jokes and compliments playfully. As a result, children are forming positive relationships with staff.

Staff promote education and positively encourage children to attend. When children are not in full time education, staff work with the local authority to review this. One child currently attends an alternative education setting and has a tutor who visits the home.

Staff encourage children to spend time with their friends and families. Children enjoy quality time with the people who are important to them and speak positively about family time. Staff also help children to spend time with their friends away from the home safely.

Staff offer children a range of activities. Staff take children out to the cinema, to activity centres and for nature walks. One child has a strong interest in animals and staff encourage this interest by taking them to spend time with animals. Staff provide a range of activities in the home for children such as puzzles and games. Staff also help children to develop their independence skills, such as cooking and using public transport.

Children's bedrooms are personalised, and their rooms reflect their interests. Children are involved in choosing the decor and furnishings. Children can choose the foods that they eat, and they enjoy the meals prepared by staff.

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

Staff understand the complex risks that children face. One child was at very high risk of exploitation when away from the home. Staff worked tirelessly to reduce risks for the child and gathered key information to help them to accurately assess and reduce the risks. Staff shared information promptly with partner agencies including the police and children's social care and agreed detailed plans with the local authority to help reduce the risks for this child. Staff have regular conversations with children to help them to develop an understanding of how to keep safe.

Staff respond expertly when children are missing from home. Staff are highly experienced and follow individual plans for children. Social care professionals say that staff are excellent at communicating when children are missing from home. Staff always talk with children when they return home to check if they need any support. Staff show high levels of curiosity and identify when children have been at risk of harm. However, children do not always receive an independent interview on their return.

Staff manage behaviour positively. There is a strong focus on understanding the child's needs and their past experiences. Detailed plans help staff to deliver consistent care for children who are distressed. Staff speak regularly with children about their behaviour and enforce the rules of the home. As a result, children are developing insight into their behaviours and how to calm with staff support.

Staff provide effective support to meet children's health and well-being needs. Staff ensure that children's general health needs are met through universal services. When more specialist support is needed, staff source this promptly. If children harm themselves, staff take immediate action to keep them safe and work with specialist health services to provide on-going support.

Physical interventions are rarely used with children. When they are required, they are proportionate. Managers ensure that children and staff are spoken to following the use of any physical intervention and children's social workers are kept well informed. However, management oversight is not always evident in children's records to evidence that staff practice has been scrutinised.

On one occasion a child started a fire. Staff responded promptly to ensure that the children are safe, and further risks are minimised. After this incident a fire risk assessment was completed with the fire service. Most actions have been completed, however not all staff have been trained in fire safety yet.

Allegations about staff are rare and are managed well by leaders. These concerns are shared with the child's social worker and the designated officer in the local authority. On one occasion, a child made an allegation against a member of staff. Although staff reported this the following day, they did not seek immediate advice to ensure that the child was safe. In this instance, there was no negative impact on children. However, the manager did not identify this as a learning point when they reviewed the incident.

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

Since the last inspection there have been changes in the leadership team. A new manager and responsible individual have been appointed. The manager is an experienced leader in the organisation and has applied to register with Ofsted.

Staff say that the new manager supports them well. Professionals praise the manager's calm and nurturing approach to the children and their communication with professionals.

There are some weaknesses in management oversight. For example, children do not always receive return home interviews when they are needed, and this is not escalated effectively by the manager. Managers also do not always have clear oversight of physical intervention records and has not ensured that all staff are trained in fire safety. Additionally, the statement of purpose has been reviewed but not sent to Ofsted.

Several children have moved into and out from the home since the last inspection. Although children have been carefully assessed prior to moving in, the group have not

yet settled. When managers recognise that they cannot keep children safe, they promptly escalate their concerns within the local authority.

Staff receive good quality supervision. There is a focus on staff well-being, the children and staff development. However, supervision is not always provided at the frequency that the organisation expects.

Agency staff are often used in the home. These staff are regular staff who compliment the team with consistent support. The agency provides information to the home about the checks completed. However, the manager has not always seen the staff members original criminal record certificate and proof of identity before they start work.

Key records are not always stored safely. For example, the log to record consequences cannot be located. The manager is aware of this and is making changes to improve this.

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 leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(f)) In particular, the registered person should scrutinise restraint records to ensure that practice is appropriate. Managers must ensure that lessons are learned from incidents and practice concerns, particularly when staff have not followed the organisations safeguarding policy. In addition, the registered person should ensure that all staff are trained in fire safety.	14 February 2025
The registered person must ensure that the following items, which may be kept in electronic form, are kept in an accessible manner— records of the use of measures of control, discipline or restraint (see regulation 35). (Regulation 38 (h)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that records relating to the care of children are stored safely and securely.	14 February 2025

The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1.

14 February 2025

The registered person must—

keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and

notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision.

(Regulation 16 (1) (3)(a)(b))

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure staff have frequent supervision in line with the organisations policy. This supervision should include conversations about safeguarding topics to develop the safeguarding culture of the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- The registered person should ensure that before agency staff start in the home their original identification and Disclosure and Baring Service checks are seen and reviewed. and ID are checked. A record of these checks should be made. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)
- The registered person should ensure that children have an independent return interview when they have gone missing from home. If children are not receiving return home interviews this should be escalated with the child's local authority. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)

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: Fiona Lewis

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Mark Dawkins, Social Care Inspector

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