

SC373958

Registered provider: East Sussex County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is operated by a local authority. It provides care for up to three children who may experience social and emotional difficulties. There were three children living at the home at the time of the inspection.

The manager has worked in the home since December 2023. The manager has applied to Ofsted to become the registered manager of the home.

Staff are referred to as adults throughout the report.

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 October 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	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 5 March 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/03/2024	Full	Good
06/10/2022	Full	Good
26/05/2021	Full	Outstanding
14/05/2019	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The home has gone through an unsettled period from early spring to early summer 2024. Incidents and notifications increased, and team morale was low. Not all children were happy during this time. A decision was made for one child to move in a planned and positive way to a new home. Adults provided support to the child to support their move. Adults did all they could to keep children safe and have learned from this period. All children who were spoken to during the inspection said they are happy living in the home and improvements have been made following the unsettled period.

Children are happy and relaxed within the home and engage well with adults. The adults speak fondly of the children they care for. Children's interests and hobbies are promoted and supported by staff. One child attends horse riding and often goes out in the evening with adults to see the urban wildlife in the local area. Another child loves buses and trains and is often taken out to experience journeys on these around the local area.

Children engage in meaningful conversations with adults and are supported to share their wishes and feelings. Children have been able to express their views about the level of support they want from outside agencies. The home has recently gone through some refurbishments, and the children have been involved in deciding how their home looks. Children's bedrooms are personalised and reflect their individuality.

Children say they feel safe and have established positive relationships with adults who they can trust. One child said, 'My support worker is the best, and she tries to get stuff done when I have opened up to her about things, and she has supported me well.'

Children have had good experiences when moving in or out of the home, and these occasions are marked with a leaving or welcome dinner. One child fed back to professionals that the home was 'the first home they had not wanted to leave'. This means children's lived experiences of care are positive.

Children's individual needs are considered regarding education and development. Various options are explored to ensure that children remain engaged. For example, one child loves animals and volunteers two days per week at a local zoo and has tutoring alongside this. Another child in the home has a positive work ethos and has had some part-time jobs over the summer period. When it is a challenge for children to attend education, adults continue to explore strategies to keep them engaged. Inappropriate language or comments made by the older children in the home are not always challenged by adults. There were a few missed opportunities when staff did not address this with the children. Consequently, this could impact on creating a

respectful environment and positive role modelling to younger children within the home.

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

Adults support children to understand risks when incidents occur. Significant conversations take place with children around their individual risks and behaviours, especially following incidents. Each child has an individual well-being plan, and their voice resonates in the strategies that are used for adults to manage their behaviour.

Adults seek out support for children from the professional network if their risks escalate. This means that effective strategies and support are put in place to keep children safe.

Managers and adults cooperate effectively with the police when intervention is needed to manage missing-from-home incidents or destructive behaviour. This ensures that the safety of children is supported, to address the risks that arise from unsafe decisions and actions they take.

When children have raised concerns about adults, they have been taken seriously and reported to the local authority designated officer. This ensures that there is appropriate oversight of safeguarding concerns.

Physical interventions are not regularly used in this home. However, when they are used, they are in line with the children's support plans when other de-escalation strategies have become ineffective. Children have opportunities to express their opinions following restraints, and learning from these conversations has informed staff practice.

The manager has not had full oversight of the safer recruitment practices in the home and has not satisfied themselves that the appropriate information has been received during the recruitment process. Despite this having no impact on children, this current practice does not prioritise the safety and well-being of children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is passionate about what they do. One adult said, 'The manager advocates for the staff team, and in times of difficulties, especially when staffing was low, they were brilliant and supportive and at times came on shift. The operational manager is visible, is supportive and listens to staff and has come to help when things were bad.'

Professionals, such as a social worker and a reviewing officer, report that they have a good relationship with the adults and the manager in the home and that communication is good between them. An independent advocate said, 'The manager made sure that [name of child's] views were heard and added in extra support via plans with carers to help her feel cared for during a tricky time.'

Adults are provided with regular supervision that is reflective and relevant to what is going on in the home and the children's needs. Adults who are new to working in the home are provided with good support. All adults' competency is continually assessed, meaning that managers understand their areas of strength and what further development is needed for individuals.

The skills of the adults who work in the home have not always been considered when the home has admitted a new child. Although training has been identified in the home's development plan, it did not take place before the child's arrival. This means there are limitations in adults fully understanding this child's needs.

The manager has good systems in place to monitor all aspects of the service and completes a monthly report that provides good oversight of all that is happening in the home. However, monthly reports from the independent person lack feedback from professionals and those significant to the children. Consequently, there are limitations to ensuring that there is continuous improvement due to the lack of independent scrutiny.

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— 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. (Regulation 13 (1)(b) (2)(b))	27 December 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of the information from independent and internal monitoring, including under regulation 44 and 45, to ensure continuous improvement, especially in implementing lessons learned and sustaining good practice. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- The registered person should ensure that staff understand factors that affect children's motivation to behave in a socially acceptable way. Staff should encourage an enthusiasm for positive behaviour using positive behaviour strategies in line with the child's relevant plans. This specifically relates to encouraging positive language and supporting a young person who was seen with a vape. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.2)
- The registered person should ensure that the recruitment of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

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: SC373958

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: Roy Noble

Inspector

Karen Flanagan de Martinez, Social Care Inspector

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