

SC379199

Registered provider: Hertfordshire County Council

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is managed by a local authority. It is registered to provide care for up to 7 children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

There were 4 children living in the home at the time of the inspection.

The manager registered with Ofsted in November 2023.

Inspection date: 16 March 2026

Date of last inspection: 4 November 2025

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

The inspector has looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

Since the last inspection, one child has moved out and 2 children have moved in. Leaders and managers have worked hard to make improvements to the quality of care provided. Several management plans have been devised. The manager understands the children well and is able to clearly articulate their needs. Leaders and managers have focused on improving the emotional tone of the home and making children feel safer. This has enhanced the feel of the home, and children were observed to communicate with each other spontaneously, in a relaxed and familiar manner. Children included staff in these interactions, and the tone was affectionate and warm. This has improved the overall atmosphere in the home.

Managers ensured that a child moved out in a thoughtful way. This transition plan took place over 4 weeks and included visits to the child once they had moved. This demonstrates to children remaining in the home that staff hold children in mind even when they have moved. A sensible transition plan was created for 2 siblings who have moved in. This provided children already in the home with time to adjust to the changes taking place.

Staff have supported children's health well. Previously, a child had felt consistently uncomfortable about going to the dentist. They have recently attended all their appointments, and all outstanding dental work has been completed. Staff have also taken time to thoughtfully discuss a child's sexual health, ensuring that they have the necessary knowledge and resources to keep themselves safe. These conversations have happened in a sensitive, honest and age-appropriate manner to help the child feel more comfortable to engage.

Staff are helping children to reduce risks. One child has not engaged in offending behaviours for 6 months. Missing incidents have also decreased for children. When children do go missing, staff take appropriate action, reporting children missing to police, trying to locate children themselves and travelling to pick children up when locations are known. This helps children to be safer. Staff also support children to take part in discussions about what might be leading to missing incidents, such as helping children to think about relationships and what aspects of relationships are safe. However, when risks quickly increase, for example when staff are aware that a child's boyfriend is missing, it is not clear what imminent action staff take to reduce the likelihood of the child going missing, and risk assessments do not coherently contain this information.

Staff do not take appropriate action when there is a suggestion of an allegation. In one record, it is stated that a parent sent a text message saying that a child had made an allegation about staff. The staff member who recorded this in the incident report did not understand the relevance of this and has not demonstrated any

professional curiosity. They have also not reported this to the manager or an on-call manager. Managers have also not identified this comment when they have evaluated the report. This means that the content of this text message and allegation has not been explored at all. Managers have recognised that this needs to be discussed with the parent to gain clarity on what has been communicated.

The quality of records is variable. Key-work sessions are detailed and demonstrate a caring approach. However, daily records are not therapeutic. For example, staff write negatively about a child, saying they are 'in a mood'. There is no description of how staff are helping the child with their emotions. For another child, staff have recorded that they did not see them at all. It is not clear how staff tried to interact with the child. This does not reflect an understanding of trauma-informed practice.

Children's daily routines are mixed. All children have clear plans in place, and the majority regularly take part in educational activities. One child attends mainstream school daily. However, one child is not in education or training. From records, it is not clear how staff are encouraging the child, and they spend a lot of time in their room. This does not promote motivation.

Several agency staff are used in the home. Records produced by them demonstrate a lack of knowledge about the model used in the home. They do not contribute effectively to children's routines. This also means that communication with children is inconsistent. This means that agency staff have not had training to ensure that they can provide the quality of care required.

Supervisions are taking place; however, these are not always regular. There is no clear plan to ensure that supervisions are rearranged in a timely way if supervisees or supervisors are sick. For one staff member, their supervision in January was cut short because of the needs of the house. The minutes are sparse and some sections are blank. They did not have a supervision in February due to illness. This staff member has not had a complete supervision since December. This means staff are not being provided with protected space to discuss their practice and learning.

The registered manager was not physically present for the inspection; however, they were available using electronic communication methods. They are due to go on a period of extended leave. A deputy manager has recently taken up the post. There is a plan in place for management support to be provided by a senior manager or a new manager who has been recruited for another home. This ensures that there is consistent management oversight for this period.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/11/2025	Full	Requires improvement to be good
11/11/2024	Full	Good
04/12/2023	Full	Good
07/06/2022	Full	Good

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; protect and promote each child's welfare; provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(i)(iv)) In particular, ensure that staff understand trauma-informed, therapeutic working and that they are able to write appropriate records to demonstrate this in their practice. Ensure that children's plans include clear instructions for staff on how best to engage children to fulfil their daily plans and arrangements.	15 May 2026
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—	15 May 2026

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; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; and take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(v)(vi)) In particular, ensure that staff are skilled at identifying safeguarding matters and that they take appropriate action. Ensure that risk assessments include clear instructions on what staff should be aware of in order to decrease risks. Ensure that staff record the imminent action they take to decrease risks.	
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— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; and 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)(a)(e)(f))	15 May 2026

Ensure that managers have effective monitoring systems to identify safeguarding matters.

In particular, ensure staff receive high-quality supervision, including agency staff, and that individual staff practice is discussed in these to support staff to learn and improve.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC379199

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Hertfordshire County Council

Registered provider address: Farnham House, Six Hills Way, Stevenage SG1 2ST

Responsible individual: Miranda Kumar

Registered manager: Karissa Prince

Inspector

Hannah Phillips, Social Care Inspector

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