

SC381089

Registered provider: Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is run by the local authority and offers care for two children who have experienced early childhood instability that has led to trauma and/or associated complex behaviours.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since July 2016 and holds a level 5 qualification in leadership and management.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

Inspection dates: 31 August to 1 September 2021

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: 10 March 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/03/2020	Full	Outstanding
04/09/2018	Full	Good
08/03/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
30/05/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Two children live in this home. The children are making good progress from their starting points. A child who was previously living at the home has moved on to live with family members. This was a planned and successful move.

Staff develop positive and enduring relationships with the children. They have a good understanding of children's complex behaviours and vulnerabilities, and they consistently respond to their needs. As a result of staff showing patience and resilience, children develop trusting relationships, stability and positive self-esteem.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, children have had good school attendance. They have a positive learning experience. Staff encourage children to succeed in their education, and their achievements, no matter how small, are acknowledged. The registered manager and staff escalate concerns to the relevant professionals when children's education is compromised. Staff liaise well with teachers and social workers to ensure that children's learning and development needs are met. As a result, one child has made good academic progress and now aspires to go to university.

Children register with the relevant health services, and staff support children to maintain a healthy lifestyle and improve their well-being. Staff ensure that all recommendations made from children's statutory review meetings and care plans are acted upon. Consequently, children's physical and emotional needs are well managed and promoted.

Children have found it difficult to participate in a range of leisure and recreational activities because of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. Despite this, staff have continued to encourage and support children to be active. For example, one child had sufficient exercise using the trampoline and riding her bicycle.

Staff have good relationships with children's family members to ensure that children are supported to stay in touch with important individuals in their life. Staff have a good understanding of family dynamics and why these relationships are important to children. As a result, children maintain a sense of identity and belonging with their families.

Children live in a warm and nurturing environment. The home is welcoming and has been refurbished with new carpets and decorated to meet the needs of the children. Children take pride in their bedrooms, which are personalised and well maintained. However, some aspects of the home need further work. For example, the garden area is unkempt, which means the children are unable to fully enjoy their environment.

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

Staff show an in-depth knowledge regarding children's vulnerabilities. They use the learning and support from the in-house therapeutic services well to identify emerging needs and risk to children. This learning improves their practice to protect

children within the home. This means that children receive good support to manage their emotions and make the right choices regarding their behaviour.

Staff work together effectively with other professionals to respond quickly to safeguarding concerns. This is a strength of the home. Staff have good relationships with social workers, police, therapists and education professionals. As a result, children have clear care plans and strategies that reduce any potential risk to them.

Staff respond well when children go missing from the home. They act quickly to escalate concerns by following the missing-from-care protocol. Staff work in partnership with the local authority, the local services and the police to ensure that children are offered a return home interview as soon as possible. This means that risks to children in the community are reduced.

Not all staff have a good understanding of de-escalation techniques or when to use them, to help manage challenging behaviours to keep the children and themselves safe. For example, some staff are reluctant to use physical intervention when there are serious concerns or when the child is unable to regulate their emotions. As a result, this led to a situation escalating, damage being caused to the home, and staff being assaulted. This was a missed opportunity for staff to ensure that the child is better supported to manage her feelings. The registered manager was quick to challenge and put in an action plan to improve staff practice.

Overall, staff ensure that risk assessments are detailed and include guidance about how to manage children's risks. However, the registered manager does not always ensure that risk assessments accurately reflect the correct information. For example, although the registered manager had oversight of a child's risk assessment, he was not aware that some information about the risk to the child had changed. In addition, some staff had not read the child's assessment. This shortfall has the potential to leave children vulnerable.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager has an in-depth understanding of the therapeutic approach used in the home. He demonstrates this successfully to the staff and creates a positive culture within the home. This enables staff to support children to make progress, physically, socially and emotionally.

Staff feel supported by leaders and managers. They benefit from regular and reflective supervisions and team meetings. Staff have good opportunities to develop their learning and reflect on their practice to raise the standard of the quality of care they provide to children. In addition, all staff have the relevant qualification in residential childcare.

The registered manager escalates matters on behalf of children when he identifies shortfalls. For example, he was not afraid to challenge a particular education provision to ensure that a child gets the right education provision and support they need. This has a positive impact on children's experiences and is good role modelling for his staff team.

Overall, the registered manager uses monitoring and review systems well to help him to have a good level of oversight of the home. However, the home's fire precaution work has not been fully completed. Work is ongoing by the local authority to address this shortfall.

Despite the restrictions imposed because of the pandemic, the registered manager has worked hard to ensure that the core staff team receive a wide range of training. This has recently included training to improve the staff's understanding of child development and suicide awareness. This provides staff with additional knowledge and skills on how to keep young people safe. However, the registered manager has not ensured that casual staff continue to receive refresher training. This delay has the potential to compromise the staff's ability to update their knowledge and skills to care for 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, 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 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— 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; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vii) (d)) This particularly refers to staff ensuring that risk assessments are up to date. It also relates to ensuring all aspects of the home are welcoming.	1 October 2021
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—	1 October 2021

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; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of the care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(b) (2)(c)(h)) This particularly refers to the registered manager ensuring that all staff receive refresher mandatory training. It also relates to the registered manager ensuring they use internal monitoring systems more effectively.	
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all children's case records are kept up to date, including children's risk assessments. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)
- The registered person should ensure that adequate precautions against the risk of fire are in place and that the fire risk assessment is kept up to date. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that records of restraint identify and accurately reflect the incident involving the restraint. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)

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: SC381089

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Registered provider address: City of Stoke-on-Trent, Swann House, Boothem Road, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST4 4SY

Responsible individual: Tracey Docksey

Registered manager: Christopher Whalley

Inspector

Patrick McIntosh, Social Care Inspector

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