

SC382138

Registered provider: Hertfordshire 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 5 children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in January 2019.

At the time of this inspection, 5 children were living at the home. The inspector spoke to 4 of the children.

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 December 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 22 January 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/01/2025	Full	Good
20/02/2024	Full	Outstanding
12/10/2022	Full	Outstanding
15/12/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The home is large with lots of space for children to live and relax. The environment is welcoming and full of festive decorations for Christmas chosen by the children. There are pictures on the wall of all children, including those who have lived there previously. One included a child's comment that said, 'Thank you for never giving up on me.' Children's bedrooms are personalised to show their individuality and interests. This attention to detail enriches the children's experience of living in the home and contributes to each child's sense of belonging.

Children who live here are happy and feel safe. They benefit greatly from lots of nurture, where their wellbeing is prioritised. Highly effective staff demonstrate a deep understanding of each child's complex needs. As a result, children experience consistent and thoughtful care that is attuned to their individual needs.

All children attend education. Some children are now in full-time learning, having not attended school for several years. This is significant progress from their starting points. Staff celebrate all achievements, no matter how small, which helps children feel proud and motivated to do well. This has resulted in children developing confidence and a sense of accomplishment in their learning.

Significant importance is given to ensuring that children have positive life experiences that contribute to their personal growth. Children have experienced holidays abroad, having never flown on a plane before. They access a wide range of different activities. Some children go horse riding, while others attend the gym. Furthermore, children have exceedingly strong and trusting relationships with staff. One child said, 'All of the staff are just really nice.'

Great emphasis is placed on building and maintaining trusting relationships between staff, parents and professionals. Professionals speak highly of the staff and the care that is provided to the children. Staff's open lines of communication with these relevant people ensure that they are kept up to date about the children's needs and progress. Family members spoken to during the inspection said that they are included in every aspect of their children's lives.

Children's moves in and out of the home are well managed. When a child needs to move into the home at short notice, staff respond sensitively and build relationships quickly to ensure that their needs can be met. When children leave, staff keep in touch to maintain important relationships. Some children remain in contact with staff for long periods.

Staff advocate strongly for children and are proactive in meeting all aspects of the children's health needs. When additional resources or specialist support is required, staff respond effectively by ensuring that children receive the help they need.

Staff are child-centred and very caring in their approach. However, children's records do not always reflect staff's sensitive and supportive relationships with the children. This means recordings do not always accurately describe the high quality of care provided.

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

Children are helped to develop healthier ways of managing their emotions. Staff use consistent and nurturing approaches to help children manage their feelings more safely. This means that children feel safe and able to ask for help when they need it. For some children, this is significant progress.

The children's complex needs mean sometimes children present with behaviours that cause serious concern. Staff manage these behaviours sensitively and effectively. When incidents occur that require additional support, staff act quickly to ensure that children receive the necessary help that they need.

Children feel safe talking to staff. Children can tell staff things that worry them and know staff will help them. This gives children confidence in knowing they will be supported in challenging times, such as speaking with safeguarding agencies about historical concerns. Furthermore, staff respond quickly to concerns raised in a timely manner. When children have called staff for help, staff have communicated with others, such as the police, to ensure that children are safe.

Risk management plans are robust, regularly reviewed and updated quickly when strategies no longer work. Staff consistently follow children's plans and know how to escalate concerns when needed. Any change is communicated in the team so that all staff know what action to take to keep children safe. This means safeguarding practice remains highly responsive to the changing needs of children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The team is led by an ambitious manager, who is supported by an equally committed deputy. Staff see them as an inspirational duo who have high aspirations for the children to experience the best possible care. Both managers ensure that staff are always supported. They enable staff to reflect on their practice in a safe and understanding way so that staff develop confidence and thrive in their roles.

The manager provides appropriate challenge to staff, where necessary, and maintains high expectations to ensure that excellent standards of care are maintained. The manager responds effectively when difficulties arise. He shows a strong understanding of the complex behaviours that the children can show, leading by example in recognition of the demanding role that staff have. This ensures that staff receive consistent guidance and support to be effective in their roles and excellent practice is embedded.

The management team members understand the team's strengths and areas for development. They are open to reflecting on improving their own practice and use this to

continually seek to improve the quality of care provided by the team. Children's views are actively sought to inform these reflections. Additionally, managers utilise research-based practice to understand children's behaviours. As a result, staff better understand the children's needs.

The manager provides staff with a clear and well embedded model of care. This gives staff structure and confidence in their practice. Training is well sourced and gives staff the opportunity to develop their understanding of therapeutic models. This approach helps children to thrive by giving them a stable and predictable environment in which to grow.

The manager is well regarded by external professionals. His collaborative work with other professionals contributes to meeting the children's needs. Furthermore, staff help children to feel heard and that their views are listened to. They ensure that all those working with children understand the children's wishes and feelings so that children are advocated for.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: SC382138

Provision sub-type: Children's home

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

Responsible individual: Miranda Kumar

Registered manager: Neil Sutherland

Inspector

Gary Smithson, Social Care Inspector

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