

SC387784

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 January 2018 and holds a level 5 qualification in leadership and management. The manager is also managing another children's home for the local authority.

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 December 2023

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: 7 March 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/03/2023	Full	Good
07/09/2021	Full	Good
07/01/2020	Full	Outstanding
12/02/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Two children live at the home. Both are settled and making good progress in many aspects of their lives. One child has lived at the home for a number of years and has positive and trusting relationships with staff. The other child said: 'I like living here, the home is nice.'

Overall, children are making good progress with their education considering their starting points. One child has achieved GCSE qualifications. The other child is attending an education provision he enjoys and which caters to his interest in construction. Some challenges remain around the child engaging in mathematics and English classes and staff are continuing to look at different ways to help him to overcome this.

Staff support children to rebuild and maintain relationships with people who are important to them. They work well with professionals and family members to achieve this. This helps children to develop positive relationships and have regular time with the people who are important to them. One parent said: 'The home has been fantastic, the support [staff] provide to my son is great.'

One child is currently being supported by staff to prepare for independence. He has made good progress with learning some life skills and has recently spent some time living independently in a flat, with some support. This experience was positive and is enabling staff to target support accordingly. Staff continue to help the child with his transition to adulthood and are taking into account the child's views, wishes and feelings about his next steps.

Staff ensure that children can have their say, raise issues and have discussions about matters affecting them. This is through children's meetings. As a result, children's wishes, feelings and requests are then acted on by the adults caring for them.

The home's communal areas are nicely decorated, welcoming and homely. Children have recently been involved in decorating their own bedrooms and say that they like their rooms.

The children struggle to keep their bedrooms clean and tidy and staff do not support them well with this task. For example, because children are often reluctant to bring down dirty crockery, staff lock plates, cups and cutlery away, leaving each child with one set each. This strategy is misguided and has not been discussed with the home's clinical support worker. It is not in keeping with the home's therapeutic model and nor is it a proportionate response to children's behaviour.

Children are generally in good health and attend routine appointments. When children struggle to maintain good personal hygiene, staff do provide some support.

However, strategies are not fully effective and more work needs to be done in this aspect of care for one child.

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

Staff respond appropriately to challenging incidents, and they manage these well. Thorough risk assessments help staff to keep children safe. These are followed, kept under review and updated when necessary. Staff undertake ongoing work with children to help to manage and reduce risk. As a result, for one child there has been a significant reduction in missing-from-home episodes and concerns about the child's vulnerability to exploitation are also reducing. The child has become more trusting of staff and is spending more time in the home.

The registered manager works closely with the multi-agency child exploitation team to assess risks, share information and work together to support children's safety. This has enabled staff to understand local areas and people who may pose a risk to vulnerable children. Working collaboratively improves children's safety.

Staff communicate well with others to help children have ordinary childhood experiences, such as sleepovers with friends. Staff act as a good parent would, making sure that arrangements for such activities are clear and well managed.

Since the last inspection, there have been no complaints or allegations made. This has been a settled period for the home and children. There has been an incident when a child broke a window. Staff responded well to this, using a restorative approach. This helped the child to take responsibility for their behaviour and contribute to repairing the damage.

When children have gone missing from home, staff follow the missing person's protocol and liaise with children's friends and their parents, as well as search local areas. This helps them to locate children and encourage them to return safely home. As a result of this good practice, children have not gone missing in recent months.

When needed, staff complete room searches and do so appropriately. One incident involved staff removing drug paraphernalia. Staff shared the information with relevant professionals in a timely manner and spoke with the child. Appropriate consequences were implemented and there have not been any further concerns relating to drug misuse.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

An experienced and suitably qualified registered manager runs the home and is supported by an experienced and knowledgeable deputy. The registered manager is due to leave his post in January 2024. A new manager has been identified, and a clear transition is planned.

A stable staff team provides consistent care and stability for children. Staff show dedication, and are child-focused and committed. They said that they feel supported by the manager.

The manager works proactively with other professionals and works constructively with others to support children's progress, well-being and safety. The manager advocates for children and challenges decisions when they are not in a child's best interests. Professionals spoke positively about the quality of care provided to children by the manager and staff.

Staff receive regular supervision and have the opportunity to reflect on their practice and identify any learning needs. All staff are up to date with their mandatory training. Additional training is also provided to help staff understand and meet children's individual needs.

Team meetings provide staff with the opportunity to discuss children's progress and needs and they also get support from clinical professionals to inform their practice. These meetings are well attended and child-focused.

The manager and his deputy complete detailed audits which cover all aspects of the running of the home. Other managers from within the authority also undertake audits at the home, which provides additional scrutiny and supports improvements. Good monitoring and oversight help to maintain good standards of 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, 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
No measure of control or discipline which is excessive, unreasonable or contrary to paragraph (2) may be used in relation to any child. (Regulation 19 (1)) This specifically relates to the registered person not locking away plates and cups to manage children's reluctance to tidy their bedrooms.	7 January 2024

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff encourage children to take a proactive role in looking after their day-to-day health and well-being. Where children have specific health needs or conditions. In particular, managers and staff should continue to review the effectiveness of strategies to support children to maintain good personal hygiene routines. ('Guide to Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 34, paragraph 7.10)

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: SC387784

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Stoke-on-Trent City Council

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

Responsible individual: Tracey Docksey

Registered manager: Gareth Dawson

Inspectors

Joanne Humphreys, Social Care Inspector
Jackie Line, Social Care Inspector manager

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