

SC387784

Registered provider: Stoke on Trent City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is operated by the local authority and provides care for up to 2 children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

The registered manager is suitably experienced and qualified. She is also registered to manage another home within the local authority.

At the time of the inspection, 2 children were living at the home. One child chose to speak with the inspector.

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 January 2026

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: 17 February 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/02/2025	Full	Good
05/12/2023	Full	Good
07/03/2023	Full	Good
07/09/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Overall, children's experiences are positive. Since the last inspection, one child has moved into the home and one has moved out. The child's move into the home was thoughtfully planned and tailored to the child's needs. The child had the opportunity to visit the home and spend time getting to know the other children and staff before moving in. This careful approach helped to ease anxieties and supported the development of early, trusting relationships.

Similarly, when a child moved on from the home, this was managed sensitively and with a strong focus on the child's ongoing wellbeing. Staff maintained support throughout the move to ensure that the child's needs continued to be met and they felt safe and prepared for the next stage of their journey.

Staff provide effective support to help children prepare for their futures and develop the skills they need for greater independence. Children benefit from personalised independence programmes that build their confidence and equip them with practical life skills in readiness for adulthood. One child has made particularly strong progress through their involvement in 'The House Project'. Their positive engagement has enabled them to successfully move into their own flat, where they are now living independently and sustaining their apprenticeship.

Children develop positive and trusting relationships with the staff, who are consistently available and responsive to them. Children are confident that staff will listen and offer support whenever they need to talk. Staff approach difficult or sensitive conversations with openness and honesty, providing calm, nurturing and emotionally attuned responses. Children are encouraged to take part in a range of enjoyable activities and to try new experiences. This helps them to build confidence, develop their interests and have fun.

Children make steady progress in their education. While some children do not always attend or engage consistently with their learning, staff and managers work proactively with education professionals to promote participation. They maintain strong communication with schools and are persistent in securing suitable alternative provision, including bespoke timetables when these are appropriate to children's needs. When children are not in formal education, staff sometimes make efforts to provide structure to their day. However, this is not always fully effective and some children spend periods of time in their bedrooms. This can reduce opportunities to maintain education routines and build children's confidence to re-engage. Managers recognise this and are taking steps to strengthen daily structure and promote children's motivation.

Children can access local and specialist health services when needed. Staff generally support children's health well and work with external professionals. At times, staff have not promoted children's attendance at routine appointments strongly enough, which has

led to some being missed. There was also one occasion when staff did not respond as robustly as expected to a child's emotional wellbeing concern. Managers have addressed this with the team and practice has improved. Children now receive more consistent and timely support for their health needs.

Children live in a comfortable home that offers them the space and privacy they need. The home is generally well maintained, although some areas would benefit from more consistent cleaning and timely repair to uphold the high standards expected. Ground-floor windows are fitted with restrictors to promote safety. However, their uniform use slightly detracts from the overall homely feel. Managers are aware of this and are considering ways to balance safety with a more nurturing environment.

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

Children are safe and feel safe in the home. Staff know the children well and have a clear understanding of their individual vulnerabilities and presenting risks. Risk management plans and safety plans are developed with children, helping them to understand their own safety and ensuring their views are included. These plans provide clear, accessible guidance for all staff, including those who are new to the home. This supports consistent safeguarding practice and effective risk management.

Staff respond promptly and appropriately when children present with behavioural challenges or go missing from the home. They follow agreed protocols effectively and ensure that all relevant professionals, carers and agencies are informed without delay. After incidents, staff offer children the opportunity to talk through what happened, helping them to reflect and identify strategies to reduce the likelihood of future occurrences. Managers work closely with external specialists, including exploitation and substance-misuse teams when needed, to ensure that children receive the right support and safeguarding arrangements remain robust. This multi-agency approach strengthens the home's overall safeguarding practice.

The manager responds promptly and appropriately when concerns are raised about staff practice. Thorough investigations are completed and immediate action is taken to mitigate any risks while enquiries are ongoing. The manager consults with the local authority designated officer and the local authority as required, ensuring that statutory safeguarding procedures are followed. When necessary, strategy meetings are arranged and attended, enabling a coordinated and transparent approach to managing allegations or practice issues. This effective oversight helps to maintain a safe and accountable environment for children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is managed effectively by a suitably experienced and qualified manager. She is ambitious for the children and provides clear, child-centred leadership that promotes high expectations across the staff team. The manager ensures that staff share her vision for delivering individualised and responsive care, enabling children to experience consistent

support that meets their unique needs. This strong leadership contributes to the home's positive and stable environment.

Children benefit from a consistent and stable staff team who know them well and understand their needs. When gaps arise in the rota, these are usually covered by the same familiar staff. This helps to maintain continuity of care and ensures that children continue to feel safe, supported and understood. This consistent approach strengthens relationships and contributes positively to children's overall experiences.

The manager has a strong understanding of the home and its operation. She knows the strengths of the service well and has a clear awareness of the areas that require further development. Effective monitoring systems are in place, enabling both the manager and deputy to maintain a detailed overview of the quality of care that children receive. Audits are used constructively, with resulting actions focused on enhancing children's experiences and promoting their progress. This reflective and proactive approach supports continuous improvement in the home.

Recruitment processes are well organised and robust, ensuring that only suitable and appropriately vetted adults are employed to care for the children. New staff benefit from a planned and thorough induction programme that helps them to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence needed for their role. Staff are supported through regular and reflective supervision, as well as annual appraisals that focus on their performance, strengths and professional development. These systems contribute to a skilled and confident workforce and allow managers to identify and plan for staff members' ongoing development needs.

Staff report that they feel well supported by the management team. They value the training and regular supervision they receive, describing these as meaningful and beneficial to their development and confidence in their roles. This supportive approach helps staff to feel equipped and motivated to provide good-quality care for the children.

The majority of feedback from external professionals is positive. Professionals highlight the consistency of care provided and commend staff's advocacy for children, often noting the manager's effective leadership and willingness to challenge appropriately on children's behalf. One professional commented on the noticeable improvements in staff practice, stating they were 'really impressed with the way staff think about children and are curious about what lies beneath their behaviour'. This positive professional feedback demonstrates the home's commitment to reflective practice and improving outcomes 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
The health and wellbeing standard is that— the health and well-being needs of children are met; children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being; and children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff help each child to— achieve the health and well-being outcomes that are recorded in the child's relevant plans; understand the child's health and well-being needs and the options that are available in relation to the child's health and well-being, in a way that is appropriate to the child's age and understanding; take part in activities, and attend any appointments, for the purpose of meeting the child's health and well-being needs; and understand and develop skills to promote the child's well-being. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that staff respond effectively and without delay to children's health needs. Staff must take proactive steps to support children in accessing the right medical and health services as and when required, ensuring that children receive timely and consistent healthcare.	2 March 2026

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that, when children living in the home are not participating in education because they have been excluded or are not on a school roll for any other reason, managers and staff work closely with the placing authority so that the child is supported to resume full-time education as soon as possible. Specifically, in the interim period, the child should be supported to sustain or regain their confidence in education and be engaged in suitable, structured activities. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 28, paragraph 5.15)
- The registered person should ensure that children are provided with a nurturing and supportive environment that meets their individual needs and, in most cases, reflects a homely and domestic setting. Specifically, the registered person should ensure that the home is clean, well maintained and presents a domestic rather than institutional impression. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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 address: Civic Centre glebe Street, Floor 2, Stoke on Trent ST4 1HH

Responsible individual: Tracey Dawson

Registered manager: Stacey Hegarty

Inspector

Kev Brammer, Social Care Inspector

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