

SC400301

Registered provider: Hertfordshire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and operated by a local authority. It provides care for up to five children who may experience emotional and social difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in May 2021.

At the time of the inspection, five children were living at the home. One of the children was living in a semi-independence flat, which is part of the home. The inspector spoke with all five children.

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 November 2025

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	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 2 October 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
02/10/2024	Full	Good
29/08/2023	Full	Good
05/10/2022	Full	Good
08/02/2022	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Most of the children have lived at the home for a long time. One child said, 'It is very good here, I have no complaints.' All the children have made good progress in their own individual ways since moving into the home. For some children, this has involved being successfully prepared for independence and becoming involved in voluntary work. Other children are developing trusting relationships with staff and can talk about their emotions and accept help and support from staff.

Staff celebrate children's special events. For their birthdays, children have an individualised birthday cake, and the other children are encouraged to celebrate the birthday of each child, encouraging positive relationships between children. Children's anniversaries of them coming to live at the home are celebrated in a similar way, which increases their sense of belonging.

Children say that they have fun at the home. Many activities are arranged for the children, and they are involved in clubs such as cadets, boxing and youth groups. During the school holidays, children have experienced holidays with staff, which they have enjoyed.

The children are making good progress educationally. All children attend education regularly with plans that are individualised to their needs. One child has a timetable that contains practical and vocational tasks to support their interests and needs.

Children are well prepared for their futures and can work towards living independently. One child, who is now living in a semi-independent flat, said that they sometimes feel 'too supported,' illustrating the ongoing level of commitment from staff even when children move on from the home.

One child had to leave the home in an unplanned way. Despite this, staff have remained in contact with them and have taken them on a planned holiday. Staff are committed to lifelong links for children. This child said:

'I struggled to believe that people were capable of truly caring about me. The staff I stayed in contact with showed up time and time again and gave me support that extended well beyond what they could be expected to do.'

Other children have asked if staff will stay in touch with them when they leave and have been reassured that this will be the case. This increases a sense of belonging for children.

Generally, the home is warm and inviting with ample space for the children to spend time together or individually. There is some decorating planned in the coming weeks, and new furniture has been delivered to enhance the home further. However, one child

has damp and mould in their bedroom, which has been an issue for several months and has not yet been resolved.

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

Children experience consistent and clear boundaries from staff who know them well. Staff use a trauma-informed, nurturing approach when dealing with children who are struggling with their emotions. This leads to incidents being dealt with quickly and with empathy. Physical intervention is rarely used.

Staff recognise the individual needs of children and what helps them to feel safe and to manage their emotions. Care plans reflect this understanding. For one child who struggles to process their emotions, staff know that keeping them busy helps, so they have a full timetable to keep them occupied.

Usually, when children go missing from home, staff take appropriate action and follow the individual missing-from-home procedure for that child. After a child has been missing, they can talk to staff about how they felt at the time. Staff listen to the child and reassure them, which increases the child's sense of belonging. However, on one occasion when a child was missing, staff did not follow the child's missing-from-home plan. Staff did not contact friends where the child may have been, and they did not look for the child. When the child was found, staff did not collect the child but told them to get a taxi home. This does not support the child's emotional well-being or sense of belonging.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The lack of consistent leadership and management at the home has had an impact on the oversight of the home. The deputy manager has been on study leave for a year and there has been no replacement during this time. The registered manager is currently absent from work. Staff have stated that it has been a difficult time with a lack of direction and support for them. Staff feeling unsupported has led to children feeling a sense of instability. One child said that while staff would make decisions, managers would then not support them.

One child living at the home has a disability. The whole staff team has been trained in how to meet the individual needs of this child, and specialist services and equipment have been made available to ensure that the specific needs of this child are met. However, the home is not registered to provide care for children with disabilities, and leaders and managers not sought to vary the conditions of registration.

The registered manager does not always notify Ofsted of significant incidents at the home. On other occasions, there have been delays in notifying Ofsted. This prevents Ofsted from assessing the risk and, where necessary, responding in a timely manner.

Leaders and managers do not have consistent oversight of children's plans and children's records. However, since the deputy manager has returned to work, there has been a significant improvement in the quality of management oversight.

There is no clear workforce plan, which hinders leaders and managers from having oversight of the qualifications and training needs of staff. Managers do not always ensure that staff have the required qualifications for the role. One member of staff has not achieved the necessary level three diploma qualification within the required timescale.

The registered manager has not completed any quality of care reviews since the last inspection. Completion of these reviews would have helped to identify any actions to improve the quality of care provided. Furthermore, this has led to a missed opportunity for children's voices to be heard.

Staff have not always received regular or effective supervision sessions. This impedes staff's ability to reflect on their practice and make positive changes to the care that they provide to children.

Leaders and managers have not always made decisions that reflect the specific needs of the children. All children have bedroom door alarms activated when this is not required for some children. Nor is it part of their care plans.

There have been several occasions recently when staff have used the whistle-blowing procedure to report concerns. The service manager has taken immediate action to safeguard children, and investigations are ongoing.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
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— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h)) In particular, ensure that there is consistent management oversight of children's records, staff qualifications, staff training records and key documents, including incident reports. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	20 December 2025
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b)(c)) In particular, ensure that all staff, including regular agency staff, receive regular and purposeful supervision and have their performance reviewed annually. In addition, staff should complete relevant training, as identified by the manager, and their records should reflect this.	20 December 2025

This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. A notification made under this regulation— must include details of— the matter; the other persons, bodies or organisations (if any) who or which have been notified; and any actions taken by the registered person as a result of the matter; must be made or confirmed in writing. (Regulation 40 (4)(e) (5)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(b)) In particular, the registered manager must ensure that all significant incidents are reported to Ofsted and the local authority designated officer in a timely manner and ensure there are clear, detailed records of these concerns, discussions, actions and outcomes.	28 November 2025
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home. (Regulation 14 (2)(a)) In particular, the registered manager must ensure that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose.	20 November 2025
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months.	20 December 2025

In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. After completing a quality of care review, the registered person must produce a written report about the quality of care review and the actions which the registered person intends to take as a result of the quality of care review ("the quality of care review report"). The registered person must— supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed; and make a copy of the quality of care review report available on request to a placing authority, if the placing authority is not the parent of a child accommodated in the home. The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c) (3) (4)(a)(b)(c))	
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff—	20 December 2025

meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans; and

understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children. (Regulation 11 (2)(a)(i))

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the home is a nurturing, supportive environment and adequately cleaned throughout. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that a workforce development plan is in place that fulfils all the related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20) and should be regularly updated, including any new qualifications and training by staff. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 53, paragraph 10.8)
- The registered person should ensure that any decisions to limit a child's access to any area of the home, and any modifications to the environment of the home, must only be made where this is intended to safeguard the child's welfare. All decisions should be informed by a rigorous assessment of that individual child's needs, be properly recorded and be kept under regular review. In particular, door alarms should only be used if they are part of the child's plan ('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: SC400301

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: Thomas Moore

Inspector

Karen Karlsson, Social Care Inspector

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