

SC405933

Registered provider: Surrey County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is run by a local authority and provides short breaks for children with sensory impairment, learning disabilities and physical disabilities.

Thirty-one children are currently registered to use the short breaks service, and up to six children can use the service at any one time.

There were three children using the service at the time of this inspection.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since 12 May 2014.

Inspection dates: 30 September and 1 October 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	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 21 January 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/01/2025	Full	Good
31/05/2023	Full	Good
12/04/2022	Full	Good
13/07/2021	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff have genuine care for the children and children enjoy spending time with staff when they come to the service. Children experience warm interactions with staff and are happy and relaxed in their company. Children have opportunities to engage in informal learning, for example completing tasks which promote their independence skills. Children are making progress during their stays at the service.

Parents are very happy with their children's experiences in the home. When children are new to the service, they have positive initial experiences. One parent was surprised at how quickly their child had settled into the service. Parents say their children are safe and happy in the service and communication from the staff is good.

Professionals speak highly about the care the children receive. They say that the children settle well when they first start their stay at the service, and staff have effective communication with parents and external professionals. The way children start at the service is well planned and thoughtful for the children. They say children are kept safe at the service, and when there are incidents, the social worker is informed promptly. One professional said that staff have the 'ability to build trust, provide tailored support, and foster a sense of belonging for such a complex child'.

Children's views, wishes and feelings are sought and are responded to by staff. Staff know the children well and respond to visual cues and children's body language. Communication aids are used to help children express their views and wishes. Social stories are used to support children's understanding. Children have had the opportunity to contribute to the service and have been able to participate in choosing paint colours for the service when it was being redecorated.

Children have access to a wide range of activities, and staff are considerate of children's needs when arranging activities. Children have visited a farm, been to the cinema and visited sensory play establishments. Staff use local organisations that support children with additional needs to access activities they may not usually be able to experience, such as bike riding. Staff take photos of children during activities for the children. This gives children lasting memories of their experiences in the home.

The physical environment is accessible to children. Push buttons to open doors allow children to freely move around the building. Children's needs are considered, and areas of the service have been developed in line with this. Some garden equipment is not accessible to children with physical disabilities. However, staff make arrangements for children to visit accessible parks nearby instead.

Staff have been trained in therapeutic approaches. However, managers have not ensured that training has been embedded into staff's knowledge base. Following a serious incident, staff discussed calling the police in response to a child's behaviour. The

manager acknowledged this was not a therapeutic approach in line with the training staff have received and plans to address this.

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

Staff have a strong understanding of the children's complex needs and vulnerabilities, including their health and communication needs. There are clear plans in place to guide staff in meeting these needs. Plans are detailed and contain goals for the children to achieve during their visits.

Children rarely go missing from the service, yet, when they do, staff diligently follow the agreed protocols and work well with the local police. They provide support to the child afterwards, to try to prevent reoccurrence. Staff have also taken direction from external professionals around how to respond to children being missing from the service as this is a new risk that staff have recently needed to manage. Consequently, staff keep children as safe as possible when they are missing from the service.

There have been three medication errors since the last inspection. Staff have taken appropriate action to ensure the safety of the children affected and have informed parents and external professionals. Leaders have ensured that learning has taken place with staff following these errors. Learning has included additional training, competency testing and changes to systems and processes. These have been effective in preventing reoccurrences of these errors. Some medications are not sent into the service by parents. This is recorded by staff, but there is no action taken to explore whether this medication has been forgotten or discontinued. This means there is a risk that children's medication routines may be disrupted while they are visiting the service.

Incidents of the use of physical restraint are rare. Staff consistently use de-escalation techniques to support children before using physical intervention as a last resort to keep children safe. Incident reports are detailed and reflect how staff have supported children when they are distressed. The manager has oversight of incident reports. However, at times the manager has not identified that debriefs with staff have not been conducted. This is a missed opportunity to explore incidents with staff and develop staff practice.

Safer recruitment processes are generally followed. Not all checks are completed to ensure that staff are suitable to care for the children. They do not check why staff have left previous roles caring for children or vulnerable adults. Safer recruitment checks are carried out by the local authority. However, management oversight has not highlighted this shortfall.

Staff are not able to access assessments of children who are new starting in the service. There is the potential that staff may not be aware if there were identified risks to the other children. Staff say that they have information about short breaks children but not children staying longer.

Allegations and safeguarding concerns are promptly responded to and well managed. Leaders and managers work closely with external professionals to ensure that concerns

are resolved in a timely manner and that outcomes are in the best interests of children. Investigations into concerns are robust and parents and professionals are kept informed throughout the investigation process. Learning opportunities are identified and generally implemented into practice. However, some patterns that have contributed towards safeguarding concerns have not been identified. This is a missed opportunity to develop staff practice and the experiences of children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has good relationships with the children and spends time with them when they are in the service. She works collaboratively with the parents when children start in the service. This allows parents to have confidence in the service and the staff team that will be supporting their child. Parents are positive of the care and experiences their children receive.

Children are supported by an established, experienced staff team. There is good staff retention, and any shifts gaps are covered by either bank staff or regular agency staff. This means children receive consistent care from familiar staff. Morale among the staff is high. One staff member described the team as being more like a family.

The independent visitor to the home visits regularly and spends time with the children and staff. Despite frequently contacting parents and professionals for feedback on the care of children in the service, this is rarely received. The manager is taking steps to provide alternative ways for the independent visitor to gain feedback from others, such as the use of a social media group, where individuals can instantly message feedback when this is requested. It is hoped these steps will improve levels of feedback received, which will inform staff practice and experiences for children. The manager completes regular quality of care reports. However, children's feedback is not used as part of this review. This is a missed opportunity to develop the service.

Staff receive supervisions, but these are not always regular or reflective. Supervisions for new staff are of good quality. However, supervisions for established staff members are less frequent and less supportive. At times, informal conversations have been recorded in place of formal supervision sessions. This means some staff are not receiving quality supervisions and management oversight of this shortfall has not been effective.

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 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, the registered person must ensure that themes and patterns identified as contributing factors to safeguarding concerns are addressed and strategies to rectify these are implemented into practice. In particular, the registered person must ensure that staff supervisions are regular, reflective and completed within the organisation's time frame. Additionally, the registered person must ensure that children's feedback informs the quality of care review of the service.	17 November 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them, which must include details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day-to-day basis. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- The registered person should maintain good employment practice. They must ensure that recruitment of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them.

This includes ensuring that all information in schedule 2 is obtained on new staff employed by the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

- The registered person should ensure that staff are responsible for maintaining a child's ongoing health treatment, including the management of medication on arrival and departure from the home. The registered person should ensure that staff are contacting parents when there are any discrepancies around a child's medication. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.2)

Information about this inspection

The inspector has 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: SC405933

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Surrey County Council

Registered provider address: Surrey County Council, Woodhatch Place, 11 Cockshot Hill, Reigate RH2 8EF

Responsible individual: Samantha Heighes

Registered manager: Elizabeth Mahdi

Inspector

Louise Webling, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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