

SC408369

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. It provides care for up to two children with social and emotional difficulties. There is a registered manager in post who is experienced and suitably qualified. The manager is also registered for another of the local authority's children's homes.

At the time of the inspection, there were two children living in the home. Both children were seen and one child spoke to the inspectors.

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 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	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 28 January 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/01/2025	Full	Good
26/09/2023	Full	Good
24/05/2022	Full	Good
22/06/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The home environment is well maintained and reflects the ages and needs of the children living there, with suitable toys, facilities and decor. Children's bedrooms are personalised to their individual preferences, promoting a sense of belonging. Two children who previously lived in another home within the same organisation experienced a well-planned move. To support continuity of care, staff who knew the children transferred with them. This ensured that children's needs were understood quickly, enabling a positive transition. Children identify trusted adults who care for them, which helps them feel safe, valued and invested in, and supports the development of secure, trusting relationships.

Staff are confident in supporting children and have access to clinical specialists to help develop their understanding of how to respond to children appropriately. Staff have sought additional advice on how to communicate with a child who does not communicate verbally, to ensure that they can understand the child's wishes and feelings about the care they receive. This supports children to feel safe, for their needs met and their plans to be individualised.

Staff ensure that children know how to make a complaint and are offered independent advocacy. Complaints made by children are treated seriously and responded to appropriately. The manager ensures that children are updated with the outcome, making sure that children feel valued and that their views are understood.

Staff ensure that children attend health appointments, have access to local services and that their individual health needs are understood. This supports children to remain healthy and to meet their developmental milestones. Staff speak to children to support their curiosity and understanding around their development and provide children with a safe space in which to ask these questions. This means that children understand how to keep safe as they grow older and build healthy and respectful relationships with their peers.

Staff support children to maintain relationships with the people who are important to them, and provide support in the community to ensure that children can see their family members. This helps children to maintain these relationships and supports their sense of identity.

Staff are committed to supporting children's engagement in education and consistently advocate for them to receive appropriate provision. When children are not attending formal education, staff provide structured activities in the home, planned in consultation with specialist therapeutic services. Staff are persistent in their efforts to encourage one child who struggles to attend education, but further structure and focus are required to promote meaningful educational progress.

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

Staff have a clear understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities and the risks to children. Comprehensive risk assessments and safety plans are in place. Staff adopt a proactive and inquisitive approach, involving children in discussions and planning to help them understand risks and develop strategies to keep themselves safe. One child is encouraged and supported to spend time away from the home with friends. This proactive approach has resulted in the child maintaining contact with staff throughout, which promotes safety and supports the development of appropriate independence skills.

Staff demonstrate a strong understanding of online safety risks and implement well-developed strategies to keep children safe. Internet filters are installed on children's devices, enabling effective management of online activity and safeguarding. Staff hold regular, meaningful discussions with children and adopt a sensitive approach, offering reassurance when addressing difficult topics. This helps children feel respected and able to understand risks and make informed choices.

Physical intervention is used only as a last resort. Staff prioritise de-escalation through therapeutic strategies before applying approved intervention techniques. When children are held, this is necessary, and their views and feelings are gathered following the incident. The manager maintains strong oversight of restrictive practice and uses reflection and staff learning to improve approaches. This oversight identified that staff previously withdrew from holds too soon, which contributed to higher numbers of restraints. As a result, the number of incidents reduced significantly, and the impact on children has lessened.

Missing-from-home incidents are minimal. Clear protocols are in place for staff to follow, and responses are generally well coordinated, with relevant professional networks notified. On one occasion, there was a delay in following protocol. This was promptly identified and addressed by the registered manager, and the child returned safely. This proactive approach, combined with staff forming trusting relationships with children, has contributed to a reduction in incidents.

Allegations made by children are investigated in line with statutory guidance and shared appropriately with safeguarding partners. Children are supported and protected throughout the process and are informed of the outcome. This transparent and responsive approach promotes children's sense of safety and reinforces the value placed on their voice and experiences. The manager and staff demonstrate a reflective approach and learn from incidents to strengthen practice.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The staff team is led by a motivated registered manager. She advocates on behalf of children and has a clear vision and high aspirations for them. The registered manager leads by example and is creating a positive culture among the team.

There is a recently established staff team in place. The registered manager has acted effectively to minimise disruption and maintain continuity of care for children. This includes transferring two experienced staff members from another home with whom children had already built trusted relationships. This proactive approach has helped children feel secure and supported, promoting their emotional resilience and stability.

The registered manager has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development within the staff team. She provides targeted guidance and direction. The registered manager ensures that specialist training is available to meet individual needs, and learning from this is embedded in practice through team meetings and consultation with the clinical team. As a result, staff are becoming confident and skilled in supporting children's progress and emotional well-being.

Professionals have provided positive feedback about the home. One professional highlighted that communication from the registered manager and staff is effective. Another professional said that staff demonstrate a strong understanding of the children and work hard to build trusting relationships. For one child, this approach has helped them feel secure and have a sense of belonging.

The registered manager has a range of monitoring systems in place to support her oversight of the children's quality of care. Oversight of staff practice is clear, and when needed this leads to challenge, discussion and shared learning. The manager uses reports from the independent visitor and peer audits to review and improve practice.

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

Recommendation

- Where children placed in a home are not participating in education for some other reason, the registered person and staff must work closely with the placing authority so that the child is supported and enabled to resume full-time education as soon as possible. In particular, the registered person must ensure that the child is 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)

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: SC408369

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Stoke on Trent City Council

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

Responsible individual: Tracey Dawson

Registered manager: Medan Case-Peart

Inspectors

Julia Tompson, Social Care Inspector

Helen Dickens, 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
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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