

SC415138

Registered provider: Staffordshire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority-managed resource centre provides short-break care on a planned or emergency basis for up to 4 children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It offers overnight stays and outreach care to children.

The service is currently supporting 33 children and their families. In addition, since the last inspection, the service has also supported 4 emergency admissions.

At the time of this inspection, one child was receiving overnight support and 3 children were having outreach support. Four children were spoken to and observed as part of this inspection.

The interim manager is suitably experienced and qualified. They have applied to register with Ofsted. The manager was not present at this inspection. This inspection was led by a deputy manager and the responsible individual.

Inspection dates: 17 and 19 March 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	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: 21 January 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/01/2025	Full	Good
13/02/2024	Full	Good
01/02/2023	Full	Good
01/12/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children receive good quality, individualised care from an experienced, child focused and nurturing staff team. Staff know the children extremely well, including their likes, dislikes, preferences, communication styles and vulnerabilities. Children have warm, trusting relationships with staff and children said that they like the staff, enjoy their short breaks and feel 'happy' and 'safe.'

Safe and nurturing relationships with staff help children to have positive experiences. Children make progress in areas, such as communication, socialisation and independence. When on short breaks, staff support children to learn new skills and have opportunities to make friends and try new things. For example, children have learnt to ride a bike or have been to their first football match. Families are extremely positive about the quality-of-care that children receive and how this also helps the wider family. For some children, this has prevented them needing to be supported in long term care.

Managers approach to care planning is highly effective. Managers and staff work closely with parents, schools and other agencies to get to know children and children are encouraged to visit the centre before staying overnight. This helps children to feel comfortable and settle in quickly. When incidents occur between children, staff are quick to respond and take action to keep children safe.

Since the last inspection, there has been an increase in emergency moves into the centre. On occasions, some children have stayed over 17 days, which is outside the conditions of registration. However, managers carefully consider any extensions to ensure that they are in children's best interests. This provides children with stability and reduces the need for several moves. While this has meant some short breaks have been cancelled, managers and staff have worked with families to offer alternative stays or outreach support, to minimise the impact on children and their families.

Staff celebrate children's achievements through positive praise and the centre's own children's university. This allows children to achieve certificates and qualifications for working towards their independence and developing their social skills. This holistic and creative approach supports children's learning, makes them feel valued and promotes their self-esteem.

Staff understand children's health needs. They work closely with health professionals when there are concerns around a child's health or medication and support children to attend medical appointments, when required. This promotes children to have positive health outcomes. Furthermore, when there are emergency admissions, the team work with health professionals and partner agencies to ensure that children's needs can be met and risks mitigated as much as possible.

The centre's physical environment is lovely and child focused. It is clean, beautifully decorated and adapted to meet children's needs. Children's bedrooms are themed and there is lots of space, sensory equipment and games. This provides children with a comfortable space that they enjoy spending time in.

Overall, managers and staff work hard to ensure that children's views are sought, understood and considered. Staff understand children's differing communication styles. They use a variety of systems to ascertain children's wishes and feelings, including gathering regular feedback and through the monthly children's council. As a result, children have opportunities to participate in the decision making about the centre and influence their own care. However, on one occasion, managers and staff failed to identify a concern in one child's feedback. This shortfall was a missed opportunity to ensure that the child felt heard. Managers have now followed this up and taken action.

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

Managers and staff know children well. Managers ensure that staff have up to date, clear guidance on how to meet children's needs and mitigate risk. As a result, staff understand and can manage children's risks and vulnerabilities effectively. Subsequently, incidents in the centre are rare.

Staff only use physical restraint as a last resort to keep children and staff safe. Managers have oversight of all incidents. They ensure that children and staff are spoken to. This creates a culture of learning, developing staff practice and helps to keep children safe.

Staff complete meaningful, age-appropriate work with children. This helps children to understand their own needs, risks and supports them to keep themselves safe. For example, staff have worked with children to develop their understanding of e-safety.

Leaders and managers usually follow safeguarding procedures when there are concerns. They inform appropriate professionals and work collaboratively to safeguard children. However, records of action that has been taken are not always clear. While on this occasion, this has not impacted on children's safety, it does have a potential to do so.

Managers ensure that staff are vetted prior to working in the home. These processes are generally well completed. However, managers do not always assess applicants' previous employment history fully. This shortfall has potential to lead to unsafe adults working in the home.

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

Since the last inspection, there have been changes in the leadership and management of the home. The previous registered manager had been absent for over 12 months. A deputy manager has covered the management of the centre, in their absence. There has also been a change in the responsible individual. This instability in the management team has at times impacted on the quality and consistency of management oversight.

Management monitoring systems for the home are not always effective. While managers have a good working knowledge of the home and the children, their monitoring does not consistently identify shortfalls in the children's and staff's records, and their oversight is not always clear. However, leaders and managers are reflective. They do have a good understanding of the strengths and are realistic about the development needs of the service. They have ambitions for the service, staff and children to do well.

There is an extensive training offer in place, to enable staff to have the skills to meet children's individual needs. However, not all staff have training in the home's model of care. This means not all staff have the training to enable them to deliver the model of care as set out in the home's statement of purpose. Furthermore, two staff are out of timescales stipulated in regulation to obtain the appropriate childcare qualification.

Managers are aware of the need to notify Ofsted of significant events. However, on one occasion managers did not notify Ofsted of a safeguarding concern. As a result, Ofsted were not aware of events and the action being taken to safeguard a child.

Staff are positive about working in the service and the support they receive from managers. Staff receive regular supervision, and annual appraisal. There are also regular reflective team meetings and team development days. These help staff to develop their practice and understand the way that the staff team works together.

Managers use consultation and feedback from others to develop the service that they offer. For example, following consultation with parents, a service newsletter was developed and is now sent to parents, quarterly.

Managers and staff have built extremely positive relationships with professionals. This ensures effective communication and supports children to receive the care that they need. Feedback received from parents and professionals is consistently good. They are complimentary about the quality of care afforded to children, communication from staff and how the service helps the whole family. One parent said,

'What staff provide isn't just care; it is peace of mind, joy for our child, and balance for our family. We are deeply grateful for the wonderful team and everything they do.'

While one social worker, commented,

'Communication is excellent. The service is a god send for families. Would clone if I could. A really good provision, has effectively kept [name of child] out of care.'

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— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(g)(ii)(h)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that that there is effective, timely monitoring and oversight of the quality-of-care the child receives and that they take action to address repeated shortfalls and requirements raised. In addition, leaders and managers must ensure that: - any safeguarding concerns are notified to Ofsted and that there are clear records of all action taken;	20 April 2026

- they have oversight of all children's consultations and timely action is taken when there may be concerns; and - staff are provided with training to enable them to have the skills to deliver the model of care outlined in the statement of purpose. Part of this requirement was raised at the last inspection and has been restated.	
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained— the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma. The relevant date is— in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home; or (b)in the case of an individual who was working in a care role in a home on 1st April 2014, 1st April 2016.	20 April 2026

The registered person may defer the relevant date if the individual—

does not work, or has not worked, in a care role in a home for a prolonged period; or

works, or has worked, in a care role in a home on a part-time basis.

(Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(d) (4)(a)(b) (5)(a)(b) (6)(a)(b))

This specifically relates to leaders and managers ensuring that all staff have full information in relation to schedule 2, including a full employment history. In addition, leaders and managers must ensure that all staff are supported to obtain appropriate qualifications in accordance with timescales stipulated in the regulation.

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: SC415138

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider address: 1 Staffordshire Place, Stafford, Staffordshire ST16 2DH

Responsible individual: Joanne Spender

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Sonia Sullivan, Social Care Inspector

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