

SC415400

Registered provider: Gloucestershire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is operated by the local authority. It provides a short breaks provision for a maximum of six children up to the age of 18 years with learning and/or physical disabilities. A total of eighteen children use this service. One child was at the home during the inspection, and they were supported to talk with the inspector.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since February 2024.

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 February 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: 31 October 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
31/10/2023	Full	Good
06/02/2023	Full	Good
24/10/2022	Full	Inadequate
17/11/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are supported to have regular overnight stays in the home. Before they stay, they are encouraged to visit the home and meet the staff so that they can imagine what it might be like for them to stay there. Children and their families are supported to be involved in planning for the child's stay, which helps to alleviate any anxieties that there may be about the child staying away from the family home. Children's key workers play an important role in building personable and collaborative relationships between the staff and children's families. One family member commented, '[The staff] made it easy for us to leave our [child with them] for the first time. [They] completely listened to what we said.' Another stated, '[The staff] look after [our child] as we would look after [them].'

Children's views and wishes are prioritised when their care is being planned. Staff use a range of communication techniques to capture children's voice and assure them that their views and wishes are being heard and acted on.

Children are offered the opportunity to participate in a range of enjoyable activities, such as going to local parks and fetes, swimming and baking. The registered manager proudly explained, '[Staff] are able to give children opportunities that they may not have been able to have elsewhere.'

When children stay overnight, they are encouraged and supported to personalise their bedroom in line with their interests and hobbies. Children can leave some of their belongings in the home, so that they are readily available to them for their next visit. This helps children to experience a sense of belonging and familiarity. One child said that they like visiting the home. It was clear that they were relaxed and comfortable in their surroundings, and staff were responsive to their needs.

Staff work alongside children, their family and other professionals to identify suitable targets to support children's development. Targets are individual for each child and focus on what is important to them. Children are making progress from their starting points and these achievements are celebrated with them and with their families.

The home has nice spaces for children to spend time in, including a sensory room, a playroom and a lounge. There is also accessible outdoor play equipment for children to use. However, some children with mobility difficulties are not able to access the first floor of the home. For some children, this adversely impacts their experiences, as they do not benefit from some of the facilities that are available to others. Senior leaders have confirmed that they are planning to recommission a lift that is currently out of service.

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

Children are helped to keep safe in this home. Although risks assessments are not always clear about the steps that staff should take to help mediate risk, staff demonstrate a good understanding of risk management and how to respond to children effectively. Staff speak confidently about following the procedures that are in place to protect children from harm and respond to emergency health needs.

Medication is stored securely and administered safely. When medication errors are identified, staff are supported to reflect on what happened and take action to prevent future errors from occurring. Staff support children to take their medication, in line with their needs and the associated risks. This provides children with a greater sense of independence and helps them to meet their own health needs.

Staff interactions with children are warm, caring and nurturing. Staff adopt a non-confrontational approach when supporting children and encourage them to make positive choices. There have been times when staff's therapeutic approach with children has been questioned and one parent has suggested that 'sometimes, staff need to put their foot down'. However, staff are committed to the ethos of the home and their chosen behavioural approach.

When concerns are raised about a child suffering harm, staff promptly report the concerns to the relevant internal and external professionals. This allows for appropriate action to be taken to protect children. However, managers do not always critically evaluate the actions and outcomes that are agreed. Although appropriate actions are taken, managers are not always aware of this. The approach to the management of safeguarding concerns is sometimes passive.

Staff have used restraint with children on five occasions. When restraint has been used, it has been necessary and proportionate to the risk of harm. However, the registered manager's oversight of restraint is not always thorough or sufficiently curious. As a result, some important information is not captured in records. For example, on one occasion, two different staff members used restraint to help to keep a child and others safe. However, only one of these restraints was reflected on. Consequently, important analysis and learning from this incident were missed.

In addition, it is not always clear what steps staff take to prevent the use of restraint. Moreover, debriefs with children do not always seek to gather the child's views about what happened.

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

Children's care plans are variable in quality. Some plans are personal to the child's needs and consider their preferences, which helps children to feel listened to and cared for. However, other plans are less helpful for staff, as they are out of date and/or contain inconsistent information.

Safer recruitment checks are in place to help leaders and managers demonstrate that staff are suitable to work with children. Despite this, leaders and managers cannot always provide evidence that the required checks have been completed. Further, the oversight of recruitment by leaders and managers is not always robust as inconsistencies and discrepancies that are highlighted by checks are not always identified or explored.

Staff team meetings provide staff with the opportunity to reflect on the children's needs and the care that they provide to them. Attendance at team meetings is variable, although leaders and managers make arrangements to ensure that staff are aware of the discussions that have been held. When actions are agreed in team meetings, they are not always reviewed for progress. As a result, some actions are at risk of drifting.

Leaders and managers have taken steps to ensure that they are included in children's care planning. Overall, these actions have been successful, and staff have been more able to contribute to children's plans and share their experiences of the child. However, there are still some occasions when opportunities for staff to provide their input are missed.

When complaints are received from children or their family members, they are carefully considered and investigated. However, responses to complaints by leaders and managers vary. On some occasions, leaders and managers have not been able to find an acceptable solution, which has resulted in repeated concerns being raised by a family member. When this happens, senior leaders have encouraged the use of the complaints process, but concerns remain ongoing. On other occasions, complaints have resulted in learning for staff, which has been used to inform the care that is provided.

The home's staff training matrix helps leaders and managers to maintain oversight of staff training needs. When training is required, or an update is due, it is quickly identified so that it can be provided to staff swiftly. This helps staff to develop their skills and knowledge to ensure that children's complex needs are met. When vulnerabilities in staff practice are identified, appropriate support is provided to staff to help them to learn and improve the care that they provide.

Leaders and managers have taken action to address the requirements and recommendations that were raised at the last inspection. Leaders and managers are receptive to feedback and acknowledge the action that should be taken to improve the quality of care. Although leaders and managers spoke positively about the systems that are in place to monitor the quality of care, these systems are not always effective. Some of the recording systems that are used in the home appear to hinder oversight rather than promote it.

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— understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; 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)(f)(h)) In particular, the registered person must critically analyse the use of restraint to support children and staff to understand what they could do differently in the future. Accordingly, records of restraint must be accurate and reflective of what happened so that appropriate learning can be identified. Secondly, robust management oversight must ensure that all safer recruitment checks can be demonstrated to be satisfactory before staff start working in the home. Finally, the registered person must ensure that children's plans are up to date and reflective of children's needs. Accurate plans should be available to staff to support them to understand and meet children's individual needs.	30 May 2025
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.	30 April 2025

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—

that staff—

understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person.
(Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(v))

In particular, the registered person must ensure that they have a sound understanding of the actions and outcomes that are agreed to help keep children safe when concerns about their safety are identified. The registered person must be assured that children are being protected from harm.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children are able to access all shared areas of their home unless there are specific reasons why this would not meet a child's needs. In particular, children with limited mobility should be provided with the support that they need to access the first floor of the home and the facilities that it has to offer. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10)
- The registered person should understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. In particular, children's plans should be up to date and help staff to understand children's individual needs and the support that they require. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: SC415400

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Shire Hall, Westgate Street, Gloucester GL1 2TG

Responsible individual: Naomi Adams

Registered manager: Jenny Glassonbury

Inspector

Martin Brown, Social Care Inspector

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