

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 short breaks for a maximum of six children aged up to 18 years with learning and/or physical disabilities.

The registered manager left in October 2023. A new manager took up the post immediately. They have not yet submitted an application to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 31 October and 1 November 2023

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: 6 February 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/02/2023	Full	Good
24/10/2022	Full	Inadequate
17/11/2021	Full	Good
10/04/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The home currently provides care to 19 children on short-break arrangements. A maximum of six children stay at any one time. Children appear to enjoy their short breaks and take part in varied activities during their stays. Photos of children enjoying their time at the home are displayed on many of the walls. Each child has a box of their personal special belongings ready in their room every time they stay. Children are welcomed in from home and school by a caring and smiley staff team.

Managers plan short breaks well so children stay with other children who they might be friends with, or who they get along with best. Individual needs are carefully considered to ensure each child's needs are met. For example, staff consider noise levels so that children who prefer a quieter environment tend to stay together at the same time. They take into account children's preferred bedrooms and likes and interests. This careful planning maximises opportunities and fun and helps children to settle and develop friendships.

When children are new to the home, managers and staff find out as much information about them as they can. They use this to plan how to best settle the child into a new environment and routine. Children benefit from an individualised approach so decisions made about when they will first stay are always in their best interests. Staff take the same approach when children leave, usually as they have become young adults, to support them into their new environment or routine.

Staff know children well. They develop positive relationships with children and are responsive to their needs. Important emphasis is placed on communicating with children in their preferred style and method. Staff learn children's bespoke communication signs to ensure they always fully understand what children are saying. Staff are prepared to respond to children quickly to ensure they get the most out of their short break. For example, when a child communicated they wanted to go out, within minutes staff were ready with everything they needed to enable this request.

Children make good progress. They all have targets and staff know the important areas where children are developing. In one example, staff supported a child to progress with their communication, which is widening their world, opportunities and choices. Parents and social workers spoke positively of the progress their children make.

The environment is planned to meet the needs of the children, with all the necessary specialist equipment. Children have large spaces in which they can play, relax and have fun. A calming sensory room and the garden around the home, with a trampoline, swings and play equipment, are accessible for all children. In recent work, areas that looked tired and worn have been refurbished. The home now has a

new kitchen, new carpets and flooring, and some areas have been repainted. Managers have a plan to continue to improve the environment further.

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

Managers have continued in their improvement journey to embed a positive safeguarding culture and practice. Staff are attuned to each individual child so they are quick to identify any small changes in behaviour or any concerns. They follow the home's safeguarding procedures effectively to report to their line manager and statutory agencies. Staff take their safeguarding role seriously and demonstrate appropriate safeguarding knowledge. In one example, swift action taken by staff helped to protect a child from potential harm.

Restraint is not needed as staff know the children well and develop positive strategies to support them. Staff prepare the environment for children and provide space when needed, which reduces potential risks and enables them to respond quickly to children's changing needs. Behaviour is understood to be part of children's communication. Consequences are not used in this home.

Staff work well with each child's support network to develop and share strategies that best support children. For example, strategies developed at this home were shared so they could be used by a child's school and family. This has enabled the child to make progress and integrate positively into their school environment.

Managers have good oversight of risk and children's behaviour. They effectively identify when care practice needs amending to better support the child. There are good systems to share information with staff about any changes. This has a positive impact on children, as staff are quick to learn and adapt.

Arrangements for the management of medication are robust and carried out in line with the training staff receive. Medication is audited several times a day to ensure that it is administered as per children's health plans. There have been no reported medication errors. Staff know how to respond to any emergency health needs children may have and follow the clear guidance provided in emergency protocols.

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

The registered manager left her role in October 2023. The deputy manager has been promoted to the post of manager. They are in the process of submitting an application to register. Further internal promotions are being made to the deputy manager and team leader posts. Leaders are managing these changes well, to minimise the impact on children.

Managers' monitoring systems are not fully effective. They are basic and do not demonstrate managers' understanding of their service and how they will improve. Independent monitoring is not offering sufficient scrutiny and critique. While

managers understand the shortfalls, there is a lack of action to address these and improve.

Monitoring activities did not identify an occasion when managers did not receive an update or outcome of a safeguarding concern they reported. This gap left managers without the full information to inform the child's care plan. Managers took action during the inspection to address this.

Managers identify they do not always have children's most up-to-date education, health and care (EHC) plan. They are not consistently invited to attend and contribute at children's EHC plan reviews. Managers have not engaged with professionals to address this issue. Additionally, while staff have a good understanding and knowledge of children's needs, children's written plans do not always contain this important information. When one child stayed at the home for longer than planned, their written internal plans were not updated to reflect this. Despite children making good progress, managers are unclear about how long children have had the same targets and goals.

Staff say they feel supported. Team meetings are regular and of good quality and allow staff to focus on children's needs and reflect and learn. However, staff are not receiving regular formal supervision and there are gaps in training. The written induction plan for one member of staff was poor, however, the direct impact on children's care was minimal.

Managers and staff are committed to the children and their families. They hold children in high regard, are respectful and have high aspirations for them. Staff are exceptionally passionate about the role they play in children's lives. They exude warmth when they speak about children. They demonstrate genuine care about ensuring children have the best time during their short break stay. The home recently closed for two weeks for refurbishment. During this time, managers ensured children still received the vital support they required through an outreach plan, which was praised by parents.

All families and professionals gave positive feedback about the care children receive. One parent described the home as 'amazing'. Another parent described how they know their child is happy to visit the home and they 'love going there' for their short break.

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
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans; seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs; seek to develop and maintain effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children's home is to provide care and accommodation. (Regulation 5 (a)(b)(d)) In particular, leaders should ensure they consistently receive outcomes of any safeguarding concerns they report so they fully understand actions taken and their role to safeguard the child. Also, leaders must engage relevant professionals to ensure they have copies of the most up-to-date EHC plan, that they are invited to any reviews of the plan and that they contribute to the plan.	15 December 2023
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—	15 December 2023

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;

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;

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)(f)(h))

In particular, ensure that monitoring systems are effective and managers identify shortfalls and take action to address them.

Also, ensure that staff receive regular and effective supervision and that managers have an effective system to review training and staff skills and provide refresher and update training when required.

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: Gloucestershire County Council

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

Responsible individual: Sue Hall

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Nicola Lownds, Social Care Inspector

Tara Webb, Social Care Inspector

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