

SC442777

Registered provider: Warrington Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home offers short breaks for up to 3 disabled children at any one time. There were 2 children staying at the home at the time of the inspection.

The manager registered with Ofsted in December 2025.

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 February 2026

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 28 January 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/01/2025	Full	Outstanding
27/02/2024	Full	Outstanding
08/02/2023	Full	Outstanding
27/07/2021	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children are supported by staff to participate in a wide range of rich, varied experiences that would not otherwise be available to them. Staff are highly committed to expanding each child's world beyond their family home, ensuring that they regularly benefit from meaningful, life-enhancing activities. By sharing these experiences with others, children develop confidence and friendships, as well as the ability to navigate different environments more safely.

The premises are homely and there is an abundance of resources to support children to have fun. All around the home, photos are on display that capture children enjoying their time with their peers and the staff. There is a sense of deep affection between staff and children.

Staff effectively and proactively promote children's progress. This is in areas of children's lives that yield the greatest long-term benefits. Staff implement well-structured, personalised plans that build children's independence in essential daily living skills, including eating and toileting. As a result, children are increasingly confident in managing their own needs, reducing reliance on adults and enhancing their sense of dignity.

Staff place strong emphasis on helping children to build, sustain and enjoy lasting friendships. Staff and managers carefully consider how individual children's needs, abilities and interests align with each other when planning their stays. This approach promotes inclusion, reduces isolation and enables children to understand more about how they relate to one another.

A significant strength of the service is the exceptionally high level of consultation with children. Staff demonstrate a deep commitment to ensuring that every child's voice is heard, understood and acted on. This is regardless of children's level of ability to communicate verbally. Staff do not rely on assumptions. Instead, they invest time, patience and insightful interpretation to ensure that children's wishes are accurately captured. This persistent, child-centred approach reinforces children's sense of being listened to and valued.

Staff use their training and skills to tailor communication methods to each individual child. These include visual resources, symbols, objects of reference, gestures, Makaton, body language and observations of behaviour. Staff use these consistently and skilfully, creating frequent and varied opportunities for children to influence decisions about their daily lives and care. Direct work with children is also accessible, purposeful and educational. Topics link clearly to children's plans and support their progress.

The quality of written records is consistently high and clearly supports staff to deliver effective, well-informed care. Children's plans are personalised and detailed, taking full

account of their specific and often complex needs. This ensures that staff have a comprehensive understanding of each child, their preferences and required levels of support. Children's plans and progress are regularly evaluated in a structured way. Targets are clearly defined and encourage continuous development, enabling staff to help children to build on their achievements over time.

Staff demonstrate a strong awareness of, and commitment to, promoting children's cultural needs. They ensure that each child's cultural identity is recognised, respected and reflected in their daily experiences. This ensures that the children maintain important connections to their heritage, traditions and beliefs.

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

Children are kept safe through high levels of staff vigilance. Staff demonstrate a clear, shared understanding of each child's risks and vulnerabilities. Information about any emerging concerns is exchanged through well-established networks of health, education and social care professionals. This ensures that the children's needs are quickly identified and responded to, reducing the likelihood of harm.

Risk assessments and behaviour support plans are of a good quality. They are personalised, detailed and based on a strong understanding of each child. Strategies to manage and reduce risk are clearly set out, and daily practice shows that these are implemented consistently by staff. As a result, risks are managed effectively and children experience predictable and safe care routines.

Staff provide children with clear and consistent guidance around safety. This enables children to understand key risks and learn how to keep themselves safer. Staff model safe behaviours and provide repeated reinforcement. In turn this helps children to apply these skills across different settings and situations.

The workforce has been stable, with only one new member of staff joining the service since the last inspection. This individual brought previous relevant experience and skills, and all required recruitment checks were carried out. This diligence by managers provides reassurance that staff appointed are safe, suitable and competent to care for children with complex needs.

The introduction of children to the home is carefully planned, ensuring that visits and stays are well managed and both children and their families feel well supported. Even when children arrive in an emergency, managers still ensure that staff have all the required information to be able to deliver safe, personalised care. Similarly, when children leave the service, transitions are handled sensitively and effectively, minimising anxiety and disruption for children and families.

When children stop accessing the service, they are usually given a commemorative album of photos of their time in the home. On one occasion, a departure at short notice

meant this could not be provided which missed an opportunity to give the child a treasured memento of their experiences.

There have been no significant incidents at the home since the last full inspection. This reflects the exceptionally stable and well managed environment that staff have created. No children have needed to be physically restrained to keep them or others safe. The manager understands their duty to inform Ofsted of significant incidents.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

A new manager now leads the home. The service has remained stable and the staff team cohesive. Leaders took a sensitive, child-centred approach to helping children understand the departure of the previous manager, minimising disruption to them and promoting their emotional security. The new manager previously worked in the home as a deputy manager and so knows the staff and children well. Staff, professionals and families speak highly of the leadership team.

Managers demonstrate a strong commitment to ensuring that staff have the specialist knowledge and skills required to meet the complex and changing needs of the children in their care. Bespoke training is routinely arranged in response to new diagnoses and children's individual health needs.

The manager has made some positive changes since he took over. These have built on previous strengths. He has introduced team champion roles and set aside dedicated time in team meetings for knowledge-sharing. These approaches support staff to work more consistently, build expertise and maintain a shared understanding of children's needs. They also motivate staff and increase their commitment to driving improvements.

The introduction of a new reward system demonstrates thoughtful and inclusive practice. It ensures that all children can participate meaningfully and have their achievements recognised, fully considering any limitations for the child due to their health or disability needs.

Managers have addressed the recommendation made at the last inspection. Appraisals now incorporate feedback from a wider group of people, resulting in a more balanced and meaningful review of staff performance. This supports professional development and ensures that staff receive constructive, multi-perspective input about their practice.

Managers lead a culture where there is recognition that children's progress and stability is promoted through building trusting and respectful partnerships with families. They take time to understand family dynamics, strengths and pressures. Parents say they feel listened to and are more confident in their ability to meet their child's needs. This also promotes consistency between the family home and the service, ensuring that children benefit from a stable and coherent approach.

One family member said, 'It is amazing. I know how much my child loves going. She will bring me her suitcase, and I know that means she is asking to go to [name of home]. I have no worries at all.'

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff keep and encourage children to keep appropriate memorabilia of the time spent at the home and help them record significant life events. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.5)

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: SC442777

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Warrington Borough Council

Registered provider address: 1 Time Square, Warrington WA1 2NT

Responsible individual: Russell Kelly

Registered manager: Craig Ashurst

Inspector

Rachel Ruth, Social Care Inspector

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