

SC444176

Registered provider: Hertfordshire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is run by a local authority and provides care for up to four children. It aims to provide high-quality care that makes children feel safe and enables them to reach their full potential.

The manager registered with Ofsted in August 2023.

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 June 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: 13 May 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/05/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
15/05/2023	Full	Good
29/11/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
06/09/2022	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

At the time of the inspection, two children were living at the home. Both children took part in the inspection.

Children are making excellent progress. One child spoke proudly about their plans for the future and moving back to live with their parent. Children were observed enjoying time with staff. Staff speak highly of children and genuinely want the best for them.

Children are thriving at school and their school attendance is high. The children take advantage of opportunities such as school trips and competitions. One child has received an educational commendation and an award. Staff enabled a child to go to their previous school to say goodbye and have a positive ending. This creative thinking helped the child to have a better start to a new school.

Children's health concerns are taken seriously. Any ailments are followed up with appropriate health appointments. Children are supported to take medical advice. Staff ensure that medical advice is followed, such as keeping health journals. This helps children to trust that adults support their well-being and will help them.

Staff ensure that children have sensible routines. Children have healthy waking and sleeping cycles. One child's routine recently changed to take account of his age and needs. This has led to staff taking the child to the park every day after school to reflect his energy levels. Children are aware of their routines and explain these well. These routines help children to have restful evenings to prepare them for a productive day.

The home has access to a therapist. The therapist meets with the team regularly. The meetings are divided into spaces for staff to talk about their feelings and the needs of the children and how staff can meet their needs. One child's change in routine was underpinned by the therapist's advice.

The house has a homely feel that helps children to feel relaxed. There are appropriate resources for younger children. There are games in the lounge and an arts and crafts room. A separate building provides a room for children to play computer games in. Staff have helped children to decorate their bedrooms in a way that is personalised to their taste. One child has a canopy to go over their bed.

Since the last inspection, two children have left the home. Both children remain in touch with the managers. One child moved into more independent accommodation. The child did not want to move. Recognising that the move would be difficult for the child, the manager developed a clear and helpful plan. The child maintains contact with managers, demonstrating the strength of relationships.

Children have access to interesting activities, such as Gaelic football, swimming and regular trips to a theme park. One child talked about the fast rides. Staff take photos of children having fun and keep these in memory boxes. However, there is not enough financial support for children to explore hobbies such as trampolining and horse riding. This limits children's access to other nourishing and enriching activities that boost self-esteem.

The staff use language that is not always therapeutic. They continue to use language that is institutional, and this is repeated by children. There are occasions when staff have not responded to children in a therapeutic way or understood the message that children are trying to convey. A social worker has recognised that staff need to improve the language they use. The manager understands that this work is in progress and has booked training for all staff.

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

Children are safe at the home. Staff provide a high level of supervision, which minimises children's exposure to risks. Staff have a good understanding of children's behaviour and individual vulnerabilities.

Staff provide children with the space to feel their emotions without judgement. Staff acknowledge the validity of children's emotions. This supports children to be more aware of their emotions. One child was able to respond maturely in a conflict situation with the other child and recognised this progress.

The home uses a therapeutic model that requires staff to be more considerate of their response to children, rather than challenging children's behaviour directly. This is especially important given the age of one of the children. Records show that staff maintain boundaries while remaining calm and consistent. This approach has helped children to better understand their choices and be more empathetic towards others.

When children make allegations against staff, these are thoroughly investigated by the manager. Children are kept up to date with the process and the outcomes are explained to them. Staff take responsibility when they have made mistakes and apologise to the children. One staff member wrote a letter of apology to a child. This role modelling helps children to take responsibility for themselves.

Risk assessments and behaviour management plans are informative. They explain each child's vulnerabilities and the action that staff need to take to protect children from harm. Staff understand the plans and follow the advice given.

Physical interventions are rare. However, when they have occurred, parts of the records have not been fully completed. This limits the evaluation of whether the intervention has been successful or not. On one occasion, a child was restrained by two staff. One of these staff was not trained and explained that they were not appropriately trained to the other staff. The record states that staff 'didn't know what they were doing'. The hold was unsuccessful. This was also the first time the child had been involved in a restraint

and this upset them. There has not been an appropriate follow up with the child from the staff involved.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is managed by a committed and experienced registered manager. She has worked extremely hard to improve the quality of care provided to children. She has strong relationships with the children and advocates for them. Children respect and trust her. She is very knowledgeable about the children's needs, and demonstrates a child-centred approach to the children's care.

The home has experienced a high turnover of staff. This contributed to previous instability. The manager has worked tenaciously to ensure that there is a suitable and stable staff team. New team members are enthusiastic and attentive to the children. This has led to improved staff morale.

Supervision sessions take place at regular intervals. During these sessions, staff are given an opportunity to reflect on their roles and any incidents that have happened. Practice issues are discussed openly, and staff are provided with guidance on how to refine the way they work.

Staff benefit from a training and induction programme. However, rotas show that there has not always been a member of staff on shift who is trained in first aid. Some staff still require training in trauma-informed practice, therapeutic working and bereavement. The manager has identified this, and training dates have been organised.

Social workers speak highly of the manager and the care provided by staff. The staff communicate effectively with social workers, which enhances the care provided.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; protect and promote each child's welfare; treat each child with dignity and respect; provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)) In particular: ensure that all staff have received training in therapeutic language and how to respond sensitively children; ensure that therapeutic language continues to be encouraged, and institutional language is not used with children; and ensure that there are appropriate finances to support children to take part in activities and explore their hobbies, as described in their relevant plans.	1 August 2025

The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out— how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home; and the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. The registered person must ensure that— within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b) (3)(c)) In particular: ensure that there are clear guidelines for staff who are not yet trained in restraint; ensure that physical intervention records are complete, including details of debriefs with children; and ensure that following a physical intervention, staff seek to repair the relationship and reflect on the intervention with the child.	1 August 2025
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Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff complete a full induction to ensure that restraint training, first-aid training and any other relevant training has taken place for staff to be able to fulfil their roles. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)

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: SC444176

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Hertfordshire County Council, Farnham House, Six Hills Way, Stevenage SG1 2ST

Responsible individual: Miranda Kumar

Registered manager: Cathrine Nhemwa

Inspector

Hannah Phillips, Social Care Inspector

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