

SC454900

Registered provider: Plymouth City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home operates as a short-breaks service and is run by a local authority. It provides care for up to 6 children with complex needs who require at least one-to-one care and support.

Twelve children are currently using the short-break services.

At the time of this inspection, 4 children who attended for their short break were seen by the inspector.

The manager registered with Ofsted in March 2024.

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 January 2026

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
---	-------------

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
---	------

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 11 March 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/03/2025	Full	Good
19/12/2023	Full	Good
24/01/2023	Full	Inadequate
16/02/2022	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff take time to get to know children, their needs, communication methods and personalities. Staff plan thorough introduction sessions for children and only start overnight stays when it is the right time for the child. When children stay at the provision at the same time, managers consider their needs and behaviours with the aim of preventing any clashes of personality or behaviours.

Children benefit from visits to a welcoming setting. Staff take time to prepare the environment for children's stays. Children are involved in making the space their own. Staff support children to make their beds and set out their toys and personal items, helping children to settle into their stays.

Staff provide children with sensitive, attuned and individualised care. They use children's preferred method of communication to enable them to communicate their choices in relation to the activities they complete, the games they play and the food and drinks that they consume. In addition, staff prepare and use a range of personalised stories using words and pictures, called 'social stories', to support children's understanding and learning.

Children are supported to develop their independence skills. Staff involve children in choosing, preparing and cooking meals and actively encourage children to do as much as they can for themselves.

Staff build and maintain positive relationships with external professionals and the parents of children. They ensure that information about children is appropriately shared, and attend meetings about children to advocate for what is seen to be in their best interests. They work with children's schools to develop joined-up approaches to the care that children receive.

Staff are aware of children's medical needs and how these can impact on the child. They have received training from healthcare professionals to administer controlled medications. The medication that children take is clearly documented in their planning and there are clear processes for signing medication in and out of the provision. However, there have been 5 instances of staff not giving children their prescribed medication. Following medication being missed, staff have informed children's parents, but they have not obtained medical advice. Leaders and managers have implemented more-robust processes to improve the handling and administration of medication.

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

Staff understand children's vulnerabilities and the risks that they may face. When children exhibit behaviours of concern, staff react swiftly. They use known and effective techniques to calm them and engage them in positive activities. Staff consider and

reflect on what children may be telling them through their behaviours. They communicate with children to gain an insight to the cause of behaviours. Staff share these views with the child's wider support network to inform children's care planning.

Staff support children to understand their feelings, behaviours and risks while protecting their privacy and dignity. Staff have sought and implemented advice from external professionals in relation to supporting children to understand their body and their feelings. They have also used social stories to talk to children about risks and how to keep themselves safe.

Restrictions that are in place are necessary to keep children safe. They are agreed with children's parents and their social workers. However, there is no mechanism in place to regularly review restrictions and devise planning to reduce them.

Concerns raised by a child about a member of staff have been investigated. The manager appropriately sought the child's views and direction from the local authority designated officer and the child's social worker. However, the child was not offered the opportunity to speak to their social worker or someone independent to the provision about their experiences. In addition, the child was not provided with any feedback about the outcome of the investigation.

The quality of documents designed to support staff to reduce risks and keep children safe is mixed. Staff are not always given essential guidance about known risks to children. This does not help them to understand the actions they must take to keep children safe and could result in inconsistent practice.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

This provision is led by a dedicated management team. The manager and the deputy manager work closely together, ensuring good communication and reflection that benefit the staff team and the children who stay here. Staff value the style of leadership that they receive.

Leaders and managers acknowledge that the provision is experiencing a difficult time. Staffing issues have led to children and their families experiencing inconsistencies and being let down. The decision to reduce the service provided to children has prevented further disruption while recruitment of staff takes place. Planning to increase children's stays is underway. Recruitment practice has carefully considered the skillset required to work in the provision. A new induction programme for staff aims to ensure that staff receive all the information and training they need.

Leaders and managers complete informative reviews of children's care and outcomes. These reviews document children's progress, but they provide limited consideration of how staff have contributed to this. Planning for children includes essential information about children, including their care needs. However, it does not set out children's individual goals and targets or how staff will support them to reach them. This prevents

leaders and managers from analysing and evaluating the effectiveness of the care provided.

Staff attend regular team meetings. These facilitate comprehensive conversations about the needs of children and the provision. However, managers do not provide staff with reflective supervision sessions. When supervision sessions take place, there is a good emphasis on staff wellbeing and working conditions. However, there is usually a very limited focus on reflection of practice and the needs of children and safeguarding. This does not support staff to improve the care that children receive.

Existing staff have not always received the training that leaders and managers have deemed essential for their role. Leaders and managers have recognised this, and planning is in place to ensure that all staff complete it.

Managers have not informed Ofsted when cumulative medication errors have occurred. This has prevented external oversight of the incidents and measures taken to ensure the ongoing safety of children.

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 registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. In particular the registered person must ensure that— medicine which is prescribed for a child is administered as prescribed to the child for whom it is prescribed and to no other child; and a record is kept of the administration of medicine to each child. (Regulation 23 (1) (2)(b)(c)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that medication is administered to children as prescribed by medical professionals.	30 March 2026
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(v)(b)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that documents that detail risks, and how risks should be managed, contain all	2 March 2026

known risks. They should provide clear guidance on how staff should manage risks. In addition, the registered person must ensure that suitable arrangements are made to allow children to fully explore their experiences following an allegation being made. In addition, ensure that children are provided with feedback following the conclusion of any investigation.	
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— 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)(c)(f)(h)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that there are clear processes in place to ensure that children are supported to work towards achieving specific goals and to make progress. In addition, the registered person must monitor the care and support provided in the home. They must ensure that they monitor and review staff practice and children's outcomes to inform care planning for children. The registered person must also ensure that staff are provided with appropriate resources to complete training and development that they have deemed essential for their role. In addition, the registered person must ensure that staff receive reflective supervision sessions that include a focus on safeguarding and practice.	30 March 2026

The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(e)) In particular, the registered person must notify Ofsted of cumulative errors in providing children with prescribed medication.	2 March 2026.
---	----------------------

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that restrictions on children are thoroughly and regularly reviewed to ensure that they are necessary to keep the child safe. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)

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: SC454900

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Plymouth City Council, Ballard House, West Hoe Road, Plymouth PL1 3BJ

Responsible individual: Victoria Whitman

Registered manager: Scott Welsford

Inspector

Carla Simkiss, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2026