

SC462951

Registered provider: ERA Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is run by an independent provider. It provides care for up to 3 children aged between 11 and 18 with social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in April 2023.

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 February 2026

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: 14 January 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/01/2025	Full	Good
16/05/2023	Full	Good
20/06/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
15/02/2022	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

There were 3 children living at the home at the time of this inspection. One child has moved out of the home, and 2 children have moved into the home since the last inspection. Two children spoke to the inspector.

The children are making good progress from their starting points. Staff encourage children to understand the importance of education. This has helped the children make progress in their education. All 3 children have college placements secured, and one child is preparing to sit their GCSEs. Staff have positive relationships with the children. They use these to promote and support children to develop age-appropriate independence skills.

The children engage in activities that they enjoy and speak positively about them. The children spoken to said they would not change anything about the home. One child said: 'I feel like this is my home, not just a home.' Another child said that they were happy living at the home.

Children identified staff whom they can talk to if they are worried or upset. Positive, warm and nurturing interactions were observed between the children and staff. The children are very comfortable in the company of the staff and have built trusting relationships with them. One professional said staff are patient, nurturing and caring and that their child 'loves' living at the home.

The staff work hard to ensure that children maintain links with those who are important to them. A parent said that their child was safe and comfortable living at the home and that the staff really care about their child.

Children have benefited from access to the home's in-house therapist to support their mental health. This helps children understand their health needs and access the right support to help them make positive changes.

Children receive personalised care. Children influence the design and decoration of their bedrooms, which are decorated to their tastes and liking. Children were proud to talk about their bedrooms. Two children also have pet rabbits. Having pets helps children to learn responsibility.

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

Staff have completed the organisation's mandatory safeguarding training. Staff are confident in their roles of reporting and escalating any child protection concerns. They understand the whistleblowing policy.

Physical interventions are rare. When they do occur, they are managed well. Children know how to complain, and complaints are responded to appropriately. There have been no allegations against staff since the last inspection.

When children go missing from home, staff have responded promptly and in line with missing-from-home protocols. Staff take appropriate action, including searching for children and keeping relevant professionals updated. Staff welcome children back to the home in a warm and supportive way. This helps reduce risks to children while they are missing and supports their safe return.

The children's guide is child friendly and gives children a sense of what it is like living at the home. The guide also contains information to help children understand who to speak to if they are worried or if they need support outside the home.

Children say they feel safe living at the home. When asked if they felt safe living at the home, one child said: 'Yes, knowing I will always have staff there if anything happens.' Parents and professionals spoke positively about how children are safeguarded.

There have been some significant incidents at the home which staff have responded to. However, when these incidents have taken place, leaders and managers have not always notified Ofsted. This meant that Ofsted's capacity to monitor safeguards on these occasions was reduced. These issues were also identified at the last inspection.

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

The manager is experienced and has a relevant qualification. She is supported by an experienced deputy manager. The manager was present during this inspection.

Leaders and managers do not have oversight of children's plans and risk assessments. Some records are poorly written and do not provide clear guidance for staff. This is of particular significance as on some occasions, there are agency staff working at the home who do not know the children well.

The manager regularly consults professionals. However, she has not ensured they always have the children's most up-to-date local authority plans to inform the children's plans.

Leaders and managers review the quality of care provided in the home, but they have not gathered feedback from children, parents, professionals and staff. This limits the depth and value of the review.

Leaders and managers have reviewed the workforce development plan but they have not ensured the plan contains all relevant information. This means opportunities may be missed to monitor staff performance and support development. Staff receive regular supervision and annual appraisals. However, the manager does not always receive regular supervision or have her performance appraised.

Staff turnover is low. Only 2 staff have left and no new staff have joined since the last inspection. All permanent staff working at the home hold a relevant residential childcare qualification. The staff speak positively about the home and are enthusiastic and energised. Staff say they feel happy working at the home and are supported by the management team to fulfil their role.

A therapist supports the staff team to understand the impact of trauma on children. Team meetings and workshops encourage discussion about policies and provide staff with safeguarding scenarios to develop their understanding of keeping children safe.

Feedback from external professionals is positive. A parent and a professional said the staff are good at communicating, which helps them feel supported and listened to.

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; 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 ensure that they maintain oversight of children's plans and risk assessments to ensure that they are recorded clearly and support staff to mitigate risks to children.	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))	30 March 2026
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;	30 March 2026

seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs.

(Regulation 5 (a)(b))

In particular, the registered person must ensure that there are no delays in obtaining updated care plans from the local authority after a children's care review meetings have taken place.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that, as set out in regulations 31–33, they maintain good employment practice. They should ensure that recruitment, supervision and performance management of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. In particular, the registered person should ensure that all staff, including the manager, receive regular practice-related supervision and annual appraisal of their performance. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)
 - The registered person should ensure that as set out in regulation 45, they undertake a review that focuses on the quality of the care provided by the home, the experiences of children living there and the impact the care is having on outcomes and improvements for the children. In particular, the registered person should ensure that when they carry out a review, they ascertain and consider the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.2)
 - The registered person should ensure that they have a workforce plan which can fulfil the workforce-related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20). The plan should:
 - detail the processes and agreed timescales for staff to achieve induction, probation and any core training (such as safeguarding, health and safety and mandatory qualifications)
 - detail the process for managing and improving poor performance
 - detail the process and timescales for supervision of practice (see regulation 33 (4) (b)) and keep appropriate records for staff in the home.
- ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)

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: SC462951

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: ERA Care Limited

Registered provider address: Unit 3a, The Maltings, Station Road, Sawbridgeworth
CM21 9JX

Responsible individual: Francis Williams

Registered manager: Louise Clarke

Inspector

Anver Rose, Social Care Inspector

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