

2571557

Registered provider: Medway Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home provides short breaks for up to five children aged from five to 18 with a diagnosed learning disability, or a learning disability with physical disability.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since 10 May 2022.

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 June 2022

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be 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: 28 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: declined in effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/03/2022	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
09/11/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are now receiving individualised care and positive experiences. A carefully planned introductory process helps families to gather all the required information about the service. One parent said, 'My child has just started visiting this home and I have felt so welcome and involved in the transition process.'

Staff have introduced coffee morning sessions when parents and other professionals can meet on a weekly basis. This is a safe and flexible space where parents can openly discuss their experiences and explore better ways of caring for their children. It has also provided parents with greater access to other agencies for further support.

Staff support children to learn new life skills. Staff work closely with parents to share information so that all the learning children have gained can be used in the family home. As a result, some children can now confidently prepare meals and access the community without the use of safety harnesses.

Staff encourage children to express themselves using PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System), 'Yes and No' communication buttons and verbal communication. An app is also being implemented to promote a modern way of communicating with children. As a result, children feel listened to and are confident to express themselves without presenting their feelings and emotions through behaviour.

Children take part in a variety of enriching and fun activities during their stays. These include visits to the local park, playing in the home's garden, and relaxing and playing in the sensory room. Children also travel to other towns and cities such as London where they enjoy new experiences.

The manager and staff promote equality and diversity. Children's religious beliefs are valued. Children from religious backgrounds are supported to pray before meals and when they go to bed. Children with specific dietary needs are provided with suitable food that reflects their cultural and/or medical needs. Children who make negative statements about their peers' disabilities are immediately challenged and informed of the impact this has on others.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Managers and staff understand children's individual risks. They use this knowledge to complete easy-to-understand risk assessments. However, these assessments do not indicate how the vulnerability of children is considered when they receive personal care.

Body maps are completed when children are found to have bruises. However, on one occasion, staff failed to adhere to a policy on reporting, which meant a parent was not informed.

Children do not go missing from the home. Staff are vigilant and consider children's vulnerabilities, especially when out in the community.

Safe recruitment practice is mostly effective. When historical concerns are identified, thorough consultation is carried out by senior leaders and managers to establish whether a member of staff is suitable to work with children. However, on occasions the manager does not ensure that original copies of staff identification documents are checked.

On one occasion, managers failed to follow safeguarding procedures. This meant that the designated officer and Ofsted were not informed about a safeguarding issue in the home. This limits key agencies' abilities to have the required level of oversight of a safeguarding matter.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has brought in extensive changes in approaches and procedures. As a result, children are receiving a good standard of care.

Leaders have implemented new processes to address shortfalls and requirements raised at the last inspection. The manager monitors children's progress by looking at children's activities, targets and care plans. This process enables the manager to have oversight and evaluate children's progress.

Staff receive training that reflects children's needs. For example, staff have received additional training on alternative communication. This additional training is helping staff to effectively engage and respond to children in a consistent and personalised manner.

The manager ensures that staff receive regular, meaningful supervision. The manager uses these sessions to support staff to develop their knowledge, to consider their professional development and to discuss practice issues. As a result, staff feel listened to and valued.

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, 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
<p>The procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect must, in particular—</p> <p>provide for liaison and co-operation with any local authority which are, or may be, making a child protection enquiry in relation to a child accommodated in the home;</p> <p>provide for the prompt referral of an allegation about current or ongoing abuse or neglect in relation to a child to the placing authority and, if different, the local authority in whose area the home is located;</p> <p>provide for records to be kept of an allegation of abuse or neglect, and the action taken in response;</p> <p>describe the measures which may be necessary to protect children following an allegation of abuse or neglect; and</p> <p>describe how and to whom staff are to report, without delay, any concern about abuse or neglect of a child. (Regulation 34 (2)(a)(b)(d)(e)(f))</p>	<p>30 September 2022</p>
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p> <p>an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious;</p> <p>there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(b)(c))</p>	<p>30 September 2022</p>
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p>	<p>30 September 2022</p>

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;

take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child’s welfare; and

are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home’s child protection policies;

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)(iv)(b))

In particular, ensure that the registered manager assesses the risks associated with personal care and makes sure staff report concerns to parents.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that good employment practice is maintained, as set out in regulations 31 to 33. They must ensure that copies of identity documents provided by new staff have confirmation and a signature stating that the originals have been seen (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 61, paragraph 13.1)

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: 2571557

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Medway Council

Registered provider address: Medway Council, Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham, Medway ME4 4TR

Responsible individual: Ingrid Crisan

Registered manager: Caren Smith

Inspector

Alphie Khumalo, Social Care Inspector

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