

SC032163

Registered provider: Dorset 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. The home provides long-term care for up to nine children who have learning disabilities or physical disabilities. The home currently cares for three children. Children have individual and adapted living spaces in the home.

The manager has applied to be registered with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 October 2023

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: 26 April 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/04/2022	Full	Good
27/04/2021	Full	Good
10/02/2020	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
21/08/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children living in the home make progress. Feedback from seven professionals and two family members is overwhelmingly positive. They told the inspector that the care provided to children has supported them to develop their communication and independence skills and to have a voice. They report that children are loved, well cared for and kept safe. One parent said that carers 'are like family' and that their child 'is thriving'. A professional said that carers are 'really in tune' with a child.

The home meets the needs of the children who live there. Some areas are well decorated and homely. For example, artwork made by the children has been hung on the walls. For safety reasons and in the best interests of children, furniture and decoration in some areas of the home are limited. Outside areas are adapted for children and provide safe, bright and airy spaces. The safety of children is a priority. However, measures necessary to ensure safety, and the age of the building, give the home an institutional feeling in parts.

Carers spend good quality time with children and form positive and trusting relationships with them. Children receive individualised and consistent care. Children are helped to use tools which support their communication and enrich their overall daily lives as they can make meaningful choices. Carers support children to have fun and enjoy activities inside and outside the home. Carers prioritise children's cultural and identity needs. They promote family time and build positive relationships with parents, which benefit the children.

Planning and support for children to move from the home is thorough and robust. Carers listen to the views of others. Working alongside other professionals and family members, they put the child and their needs at the centre of their work. When planning for a child's permanence has not progressed, leaders and managers have raised and escalated their concerns. In response to this, regular multi-agency review meetings were scheduled.

Children's health is a primary focus for the home. Carers monitor children's behaviours and symptoms and support them to attend appointments. Carers regularly communicate with health professionals to share information and gain advice. For one child, this has led to the cessation of medication that was not benefiting them. When a child showed anxieties in relation to attending health appointments, carers developed picture stories that allowed the child to gain understanding and confidence when attending their appointment.

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

Plans and risk assessments devised to support carers to care for children and keep them safe are clear and informative. They provide in-depth insight into the child and how they should be cared for. Managers use tools to monitor children's progress and behaviours to inform care planning. Carers know what children's plans say and use them on a daily basis.

At times, restrictive practice is used to keep children safe. All restrictions are agreed and reviewed regularly in multi-agency meetings and with children's parents. Restriction reduction plans are in place for all children and have led to children having more freedom. These plans are continuously reviewed and updated.

The quality of documents that record children's day-to-day lives is inconsistent. Some of the documents are brief and do not detail the actions of children or carers. Others provide a thorough narrative of events. At times, institutionalised language is used. At other times, language used evokes a real sense of feeling and the child's experiences. Several documents are written as if by the child. Children have not written these documents.

Information about children's daily lives is recorded within several documents. This makes it difficult to form a picture of children's overall experiences. Leaders and managers are exploring the opportunity to implement an electronic recording system with the aim that this will make recording more streamlined.

Restraint has been used on three occasions in this inspection period. This use of restraint was appropriate. Following incidents, attempts are made to gain children's views. When children do not provide their views, the reason is documented. Carers are given the opportunity to discuss incidents and reflect on their actions. Children do not go missing. Protocols devised for the event that a child does go missing are robust and directive.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home benefits from an experienced management team that has worked in the home for many years. Having been recently promoted within the home, the current manager has submitted an application to be registered with Ofsted. Leaders and managers have exceptional knowledge of the children who live in the home and of the staff team. Professionals and family members speak positively about leaders and managers, particularly the responsible individual.

Carers feel supported by their leaders and managers. They have experienced significant changes to working practices, implemented to improve practice and outcomes for children. Carers say that there has been a distinct, positive shift in the culture of the home. These changes have been driven by leaders and managers, who have provided support to carers to adapt their practice. Carers receive good-quality, regular supervision, which includes reflection, learning and meeting children's needs. Actions and outcomes are clearly recorded.

Leaders and managers have good oversight of the home. Monitoring, evaluation and outcomes are a primary focus. Managers complete regular observations of practice. When there has been a significant event, or when a concern in relation to practice is raised, leaders and managers complete reviews to identify what has gone well and how practice could be improved. The outcomes of these reviews are shared with carers and feed into children's care plans and ongoing supervision with carers.

Investigations into safeguarding concerns are usually robust and child focused. However, there has been one occasion where the outcome of the investigation did not reflect the evidence and the clear voice of the child. In addition to this, there has been a significant delay in reporting safeguarding concerns in relation to an external agency to the local authority designated officer.

The home has safer recruitment practices. Carers are provided with a range of training and development opportunities. Leaders and managers work with external agencies and providers to secure essential and specialist training. This is essential due to the highly complex needs of children living in the home.

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
<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>that staff—</p> <p>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;</p> <p>have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and</p> <p>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii))</p> <p>In particular, the registered person should ensure that there is no delay in reporting safeguarding concerns to relevant external investigation agencies, such as the local authority designated officer.</p> <p>In addition, the registered person should ensure that all investigations in relation to practice concerns are robust and that they fully consider all of the evidence.</p>	13 December 2023
<p>The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p>	13 December 2023

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.
(Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b))

In particular, the registered person should ensure that records of children's experiences do not use institutionalised language. Also, that records of incidents include information that provides the reader with a full narrative of the actions of children and carers.

In addition, the registered person should ensure that staff can record and access information easily so that they are able to meet children's needs.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. In particular, they should carefully consider the appropriateness of recording the child's information using a first-person narrative. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person should ensure that, where possible, the environment in which children live mimics that of a home environment rather than an institutionalised one. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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: SC032163

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Dorset Council

Registered provider address: Dorset Council, County Hall, Colliton Park,
Dorchester DT1 1XJ

Responsible individual: Daun Tattersall

Manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Carla Simkiss, Social Care Inspector

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