

1183574

Registered provider: Cheshire West and Chester Local Authority

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 who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in July 2023.

Two children were living in the home at the time of the inspection.

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 June 2024

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 **outstanding**

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

Date of last inspection: 5 December 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/12/2023	Full	Good
17/01/2023	Full	Good
10/11/2021	Full	Good
24/10/2019	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children receive well-planned and personalised care. This is contributing to improved stability and outcomes for children. One child has lived at the home for a significant period and is very settled. One professional said, 'Children have made good progress because of the warmth and care staff have shown them.'

Children are cared for by a consistent staff team. This has given children the opportunity to form positive and lasting relationships with staff.

Children receive lots of encouragement and praise for their achievements. This builds their confidence and helps them to develop a positive self-view.

Staff are child centred and value children's opinions and views. Children know their views matter, which promotes their self-esteem. One parent said, 'The best thing about the home is that staff help children to speak for themselves and they listen to them.'

Children attend school regularly. Staff understand the importance of education in securing positive outcomes for children. One child is sitting their GCSEs, and staff are helping the child to prepare for the transition to college.

Children's friends are welcome to visit them at the home. One child has been supported to make friends with local children and plays out with them on the street. This is safely managed by staff and is building the child's confidence and widening their social circle.

Children have hobbies and interests. They enjoy spending time at the home with staff as well as engaging in planned activities in the community. One child has recently been on holiday with staff, and they enjoyed activities such as swimming and bike riding together.

Children know how to make complaints. They have access to an independent advocate to help ensure that their rights are promoted. Children do not always agree with decisions that are made about them, but staff help them to understand why it may not always be possible to act on their wishes.

Children's care planning documents are detailed and contain guidance for staff to care for children consistently. Children contribute to these plans. There are child-friendly versions available to make the content more accessible to children.

The home is spacious with a large private garden for children to play in. However, door locks in communal areas are not required and detract from the homely environment that the staff are trying to create.

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

Sometimes, children struggle to manage their emotions and can become upset. Staff can identify potential triggers and diffuse challenging situations calmly and effectively. The need to hold children to manage behaviour is rare.

Children's positive behaviour support plans are detailed and help staff to respond to children in a consistent way. Children are involved in writing these plans by identifying strategies that they would find helpful. For example, one child said that having a bath would help them to calm down when they are upset.

A strength of this home is the quality and frequency of direct work with children. Direct work focuses on children's individual needs and areas of vulnerability. Staff use direct work as an informal educational opportunity, which supports the child to reflect and learn from incidents.

Allegations are taken seriously. There is a risk assessment and protocol in place to manage allegations. However, when a decision is made not to refer the matter to the local authority designated officer, the rationale for this decision is not clearly recorded. A recommendation is made to improve practice in this area.

Staff use incentives with children to promote positive behaviour. Children are involved in identifying these incentives, which makes it more meaningful to them. Staff give children lots of praise for positive behaviours and choices. For example, as part of one child's bedtime routine, staff talk through all the good things the child has achieved that day.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is a confident and inspirational leader. She is supported by an experienced deputy manager. Together, they make a highly effective management team.

The manager is a visible presence in the home, and she is accessible to children and staff. The manager ensures that she spends lots of time with children. As a result, she knows the children very well.

The manager is ambitious for children. She is a good advocate and will challenge other professionals to ensure that children receive the services and support they need to fulfil their potential.

The manager has been instrumental in embedding a child-centred culture in the home. Children receive regular praise and positive affirmation. This is strengthening children's emotional well-being and helping them to develop a positive view of themselves.

Children are regularly consulted about the quality of care provided to them. The manager has developed creative tools to help engage children with these discussions. This practice helps children to understand that their views and opinions are valued.

Senior leaders are supportive of the manager's decision not to admit additional children into the home. This temporary decision is in the best interests of the children who live there. It allows for a period of stability at an important period in the children's lives.

The manager has very good oversight of events in the home. She reviews all significant incidents in the home to look for patterns and trends. This supports her to guide and shape staff's practice to meet children's changing needs.

Partner agencies are consistently positive about their experience of working with the home. They identify good communication as a key strength.

Children are cared for by a stable and consistent staff team. New members of staff are introduced to children in a planned and sensitive way.

Staff receive regular, effective supervision. This supports them to reflect on their practice and identify any areas for development. In addition, staff receive an appraisal of their performance twice a year. The manager ensures that the views of colleagues and children are incorporated into the appraisal of each staff member's performance. This is helpful to staff, and it helps children to learn that their views are important.

Staff feel supported and valued by their managers. One member of staff said:

'I feel extremely well supported by [names of manager and deputy manager], who have developed a great working relationship. They are both committed, passionate and dedicated to the role and our young people.'

What does the children's home need to do to improve? Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that if a referral to the local authority designated officer is not considered to be required, it is clear who has made this decision and why. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 44, paragraph 9.19)
- The registered person should ensure that the home is a domestic, homely environment. Locks on the doors to communal areas should be removed, and broken items of furniture should be replaced in a timely manner. ('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: 1183574

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Cheshire West and Chester Council, The Portal, 4 Civic Way, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH65 0BA

Responsible individual: Sara Patel

Registered manager: Cherie Pendergast

Inspector

Sophie Thomson, Social Care Inspector

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