

2584908

Registered provider: Shropshire Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority home provides care for two young people who have social and/or emotional difficulties or learning disabilities. The registered manager has been in post since the home was registered in October 2020.

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 February 2023

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 11 January 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/01/2022	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

At the time of this inspection, two children were living at the home. Since the last inspection, one child has left the home and one child has moved in. Children settle here long term, and they make exceptional progress. One child has lived at the home for three years, and the child who left lived there for two years before moving to semi-independent accommodation.

Managers and staff give children who move out of the home an extremely high level of support. They work with children to create a plan which includes supporting children to decorate their new home and to move their possessions. They then keep in touch and continue to support children for as long as they want. One child who has left enjoyed a Christmas meal with staff. The same child continues to contact staff regularly for practical support and advice. This means that children continue to feel loved and nurtured by adults who know them well.

Social workers are extremely positive about the support that managers and staff give their children. They say that staff have a clear understanding of the plan for the care of their children, who are both supported and challenged. A social worker told the inspector that their child, who has lived at the home for four months, is already making 'tremendous progress'.

Managers and staff support children's relationships with people who are important to them. Staff are inclusive and respectful of parents' and carers' views. They use restorative practices with children, and they educate parents and carers in this positive practice. One carer described the home as 'fantastic' and said they were very pleased their child was living there.

Both children attend school and college, and staff do everything they can to support children's education. Managers and staff strongly advocate for children to attend the school or college that meets children's needs by working in partnership with teachers and the virtual school. They then continue this work to ensure that children's barriers to education are understood and addressed and children achieve their potential.

Children are in good health, and they make progress physically, emotionally and socially. They enjoy delicious meals freshly cooked from scratch and eaten together with staff around the kitchen table. Children exercise regularly by playing football and cycling, which they enjoy. Staff work in partnership with specialist agencies to support children's emotional health. They use research and resources to educate children about puberty and relationships, and they talk with children about their sexual health. As a result of this highly individualised care, children's holistic health needs are met to an exceptionally high standard.

Staff are creative in supporting children to achieve skills so they can move on successfully. For instance, a child arranges their own travel to watch their favourite football team. The child then goes into the ground alone to support them. Staff support the same child to acquire social skills and to make friends by taking them to play pool and darts with other families. These are significant steps for this child, whose self-esteem has improved and whose confidence is flourishing.

Staff consult effectively with children because they enable them to communicate in their preferred way. For example, staff use visual cues with one child to enable them to make informed choices about all aspects of their care. Children post written notes to staff when they are struggling to express strong emotions. This child-centred practice means that children feel heard and understood and it fosters good relationships in the home.

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

Staff know children extremely well. As a result of the close and nurturing relationships that children have with staff, they feel able to share their worries and concerns. Risk management plans are highly individual because staff complete them with children. This gives staff a real feel for the child's understanding of each risk. Staff implement the guidance set out in these plans. Consequently, children are well supported and are protected.

Incidents of physical restraint are rare. This is because of the strength of the relationships between the children and staff. During this inspection, warm and humorous interactions between the children and staff were seen. The open and honest communication means that the children can discuss worries and concerns and continue to develop positive relationships.

Staff treat children with dignity and respect. Children's positive behaviour is recognised and rewarded by staff. The staff follow a restorative approach to respond to negative behaviours and will have discussions about making better choices. This motivates the children to understand their vulnerabilities.

Partnership working with parents and agencies is exceptional. Managers and staff are highly vigilant, and they constantly document and share safeguarding information. When children's risks escalate, staff take decisive action to keep children safe. For instance, when the risks from criminal exploitation increased for one child, the managers and staff moved with the child out of the area. They cared for the child and continued to educate them about the ongoing risk. As a result, the immediate risk reduced, and the child was kept safe.

When a child is absent from the home, staff and managers are proactive in encouraging them to return. They provide the child with ongoing support by making significant attempts on a daily basis to maintain contact, to encourage them to return home. Staff also go to where the child is on a frequent basis, to

take food and nurture the child. This response places the child at the centre of practice. Being able to maintain communication during these times is a testament to the relationships between children and staff.

Staff receive good-quality face-to-face training that is research based and relevant to children's particular risks. Staff work as a team to implement this training in their everyday practice. They consistently enforce boundaries and expectations with children, and they have conversations which challenge children's actions when necessary. As a result, children's complex behaviours reduce, and they can better regulate their emotions.

Staff educate children about the risks in the community through carefully planned discussions and day-to-day conversations. Although children are kept safe through restrictions on their access to the internet, staff do not educate children about online risks. This is a missed opportunity to educate children to keep themselves even more safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager is a passionate, experienced and child-centred practitioner. She leads from the front and is a role model for her staff team. The manager works tirelessly to build trusting relationships with children, to provide them with a sense of security. Children enjoy spending time with the manager and actively seek her out when they return from an activity or from school or college. The manager and the deputy work as a team and are a highly visible and consistent presence in the lives of children.

There have been some recent challenges due to staff sickness and moves for career progression. Staff have pulled together to ensure that children have continued to receive consistent care. Shortfalls in staffing have been covered by existing staff and by the deputy, and no additional staff have been used.

Morale is high, and staff describe the team as 'resilient' and 'supportive'. Staff are passionately committed to providing high-quality warm and nurturing care. A carer told the inspector, 'I've not worked anywhere where I've witnessed such positive relationships.' Another carer said, 'I feel what we do for our boys is what we'd do for our own children.' Children are thriving because of the exceptionally consistent care they receive and the extremely positive relationships they have with staff.

Most staff hold the required level 3 diploma and receive a wide range of training that informs their practice and meets children's individual and diverse needs. Good-quality face-to-face training in areas such as self-harm, learning disability and child exploitation ensures that staff have a comprehensive and fully informed understanding of children's complex behaviours. As a result, when children show these behaviours, staff are nurturing and empathic in their responses, enabling children to rebuild relationships and move on positively.

Staff receive regular child-centred supervision sessions which provide them with the opportunity to reflect on practice and their development. Managers are proactive in developing staff and responding to training needs. They ensure that staff have a personal development plan which identifies their personal aspirations. This means that children are cared for by a well-supported, highly motivated and skilled staff team.

Managers consistently strive to improve the quality of care using a range of review and monitoring systems. Managers' constant oversight of the home ensures that problems are quickly identified and support is in place for children and staff as soon as it is needed.

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

- The registered person should ensure that staff educate and support children about online safety and risks. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.9)

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: 2584908

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Shropshire Council

Registered provider address: Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury,
Shropshire SY2 6N

Responsible individual: Daniel Old

Registered manager: Joanne Rocke

Inspector

Karen Gillingwater, Social Care Inspector

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