

SC370982

Registered provider: Shropshire Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is one of five homes operated by a local authority. It is registered to provide care for up to five children who experience social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered in November 2020 and is working towards a level 5 qualification in leadership and management.

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 January 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: 22 February 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/02/2022	Full	Good
24/07/2019	Full	Good
11/03/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
14/08/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Since the last inspection, one child has left the home and one child has moved in. At the time of this inspection, four children were living in the home. One child has lived in the home for three years, another for two years, and a third for 16 months. Children feel settled. Their individual needs are met and they are making significant progress from their starting points.

Managers and staff give children who move out of the home an extremely high level of support. They listen to children and work with them to create a plan which enables children to take ownership of their move. They then continue to keep in touch for as long as the child wants. Staff took one child's possessions to their new home and offered the child reassurance and support through daily visits and telephone calls. They helped the child with practical tasks, such as food shopping and cleaning. They then continued to keep in touch and took the child Christmas presents and cards. This child-centred approach contributed significantly to the child having a successful move.

Children's moves into the home are exceptionally well planned and include carefully managed introductions to other children and staff. A social worker told the inspector that their child received a planned induction over a four-week period, and they were pleased and surprised at how quickly their child settled.

Staff use shared interests and hobbies to develop extremely warm and nurturing relationships with children. One child attends football games and watched a recent football tournament with their favourite carer. Another child regularly goes running with a carer. Staff 'go the extra mile' in the way a good parent would. They support children's friendships by being flexible about arrangements and taking and collecting children from activities with their friends. This highly attuned care and nurture support children's self-confidence and self-worth.

Staff are aspirational for children. They encourage children to build confidence and push themselves out of their own comfort areas. One child, who loves horses, is taking horse riding lessons. Another child has worked with managers to make a slide show presentation of their experiences of being in care, which has been presented to staff across the local authority. Managers told the inspector that the impact of the child's work has been far reaching.

Staff work in partnership with children's schools. They support children with their homework, to meet education targets and to attend important meetings. This helps to reduce barriers to children's learning and enables children to progress and achieve at school.

Staff sensitively support children with their health and well-being. They know children exceptionally well and are creative in helping children with their self-care. For example, when a child struggles with cleaning their teeth, staff play games with them to keep them to task. At bedtime, they read the child stories and talk with them and about tasks for the next day. This helps with children's emotional regulation and feelings of anxiety. Staff seek specialist help when necessary and carry out research to meet the specific needs of the children they care for. The multi-team approach means that children's needs are promoted effectively.

Overall, the home is a homely place for children to relax and spend time with staff and other children. Children's bedrooms are highly personalised and communal areas are well furnished and have photos of children and staff on display. However, bathrooms and the kitchen are tired looking with institutional flooring. A bathroom window does not have a blind. Doors have prominent institutional locks, and a cupboard has a visible unused padlock. Managers are aware that these shortfalls detract from the homely feel of the home and have plans to address them.

Staff produce a newsletter of children's experiences, which includes photos and personalised messages. Having a record of these positive memories increases children's sense of self-worth and their resilience. In addition, staff support children to write and review their internal plans. This provides children with a sense of ownership and responsibility for their care.

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

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 completed with each child. These provide staff with highly individualised agreed strategies which they implement to manage children's complex needs. Consequently, children are well supported and protected. Children are safe and say that they feel safe.

Staff are professionally curious and constantly vigilant about any new or emerging risks. Staff quickly share any safeguarding concerns and 'soft intelligence' with relevant agencies, including the police. They participate in multi-agency meetings and implement agreed strategies. This multi-agency approach prevents children's behaviours from escalating and supports children to make better choices. Because of this exceptional multi-agency approach, children are safer.

Regular consultations with a clinical psychologist are used well and are effective in improving staff practice. This allows staff to understand the reasons behind some behaviours and provide an excellent nurturing environment for the children. Staff follow the principles of restorative practice. They have not used physical intervention to manage behaviour to keep children or others safe. Staff manage inappropriate behaviour through natural consequences, which helps children to take responsibility and learn from their behaviour.

On the exceptionally rare occasion that a child goes missing from the home, staff follow the missing-from-care protocols effectively. Additionally, staff anticipate and manage the risks to children of going missing. Staff share plans with the police, and they benefit from information-sharing about risks such as child exploitation in the local area. This extremely proactive approach ensures that staff can respond quickly and effectively when children are at risk in the community.

Managers ensure that children who are new to the home are exceptionally well matched, and their risks are fully understood. Staff then ensure that children live safely together. Children have not reported bullying in the home, which demonstrates how settled and protected they feel. Consequently, this creates a settled and nurturing environment where children are safe, calm and comfortable.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager is an ambitious and inspirational leader who has high aspirations for children in his care and his staff team. The manager's commitment has improved and radically changed the culture in the home. Staff find the manager personable and approachable and say that they benefit from his ongoing support. Children enjoy spending time with the manager and are openly affectionate with him. This outstanding practice supports the children to feel safe and secure and has resulted in children thriving, achieving and progressing.

The manager and the responsible individual work as a team and have a strong presence in the home. They maintain constant oversight of the home, using a range of review and monitoring systems. These effective systems provide a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. This means that managers can quickly address issues and plan developments and improvements across the home.

The home benefits from having a diverse team of staff from a variety of backgrounds. Managers recognise staff's experience and interests, and they develop these to improve the quality of care. Staff morale is high, and turnover of staff is minimal. A carer told the inspector, 'I have never come across such a supportive team of each other and of the children.' The stability and expertise of the staff team contribute to achieving positive outcomes for the children.

The passionately motivated staff team receives regular reflective supervision and consistent support. New staff are well supported through a clear, effective induction process. 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. As a result, children receive high-quality care from skilled and well-informed staff who are fully invested in children's progress.

Managers do not have a workforce development plan to demonstrate how the staff are supported, developed and trained to work effectively with children. This means that managers are not taking all available steps to further improve the outstanding care that children receive.

Children's views are central to the running of the home. Staff consult children in all aspects of their care and support them to take increasing control of decisions that affect them. Managers consult with children and work alongside them to improve many aspects of the physical environment. This is an excellent example of involving children in decisions about their day-to-day care.

The registered manager has excellent relationships with partner agencies, which ensures that children's needs are met effectively. For example, he consults with the local mental health team when children are at risk of self-harm and with drug and alcohol services. This means that children have quick access to local and specialist resources for support with their mental health and emotional well-being.

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

- The registered person should ensure that the home is a nurturing and supportive environment that meets the needs of the children. In most cases, children's homes are homely, domestic environments. Improvements should be made to the kitchen and bathrooms, and any other environmental issues that detract from a family home should be addressed. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should 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 necessary management and staffing structure, (including any staff commissioned to provide health and education), the experience and qualifications of staff currently working within the staffing structure and any further training required for those staff, to enable the delivery of the home's statement of purpose
 - 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.The plan should be updated to include any new training and qualifications completed by staff while working at the home and used to record the ongoing training and continuing professional development needs of staff, including the home's manager. ('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: SC370982

Provision sub-type: Children's home

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

Responsible individual: Daniel Old

Registered manager: Calum Yorke

Inspectors

Karen Gillingwater, Social Care Inspector
Glenis Staiger-Grant, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
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