

1278966

Registered provider: Smoothstone Care & Education Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home provides care for up to six children aged between 11 and 18 years. The children may have multiple and complex needs, such as special educational needs and/or disabilities or associated mental health conditions. The home extends its leaving age to 20 years when this will assist young people in their transition to independence.

There were four children living at the home at the time of inspection.

The manager is registered with Ofsted and suitably qualified.

Inspection dates: 24 to 26 October 2023

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	good
---	------

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

Date of last inspection: 8 November 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/11/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
08/02/2022	Full	Good
06/11/2019	Full	Good
07/01/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The children are making good progress in all areas of their lives. Two children have had planned moves on from the home, while another two children have had child-centred moves into the home. When children move on from the home, many of them choose to keep in touch, keeping staff updated on their achievements. One child who has recently moved on has been asked to be a child ambassador for the organisation. They will gain the views of children and make recommendations to leaders and managers to help the organisation learn from children's experiences of living at the home.

Children have secure and trusting relationships with staff. There are nurturing, playful and supportive interactions between staff and children. These positive relationships provide children with stability and help them feel a sense of belonging.

Children live in a warm, loving home with a strong family feel. The atmosphere is calm and relaxed. Staff make every effort to ensure that each child feels comfortable, showing great warmth and affection towards the children. Staff take every opportunity to make children feel special; this includes supporting children to personalise their rooms. One child said that having these opportunities made them feel very special and like they belong here. The child added, 'It's the best place I've ever lived.'

Children continue to make good progress in education. Despite some children previously having long periods out of education, all four children have 100% attendance. Children say they enjoy going to school and are proud of their achievements. One child who has recently moved on from the home achieved 10 GCSEs, and another child who had previously not attended education for a prolonged period is attending full time. This is good progress.

Children have the chance to embrace new experiences. Staff make sure that children's complex needs do not stop them from accessing activities and facilities that they enjoy. The range of activities provided helps children to develop social skills and achieve positive outcomes.

Feedback from external professionals and family members is good. The manager and staff have developed good relationships with important people in the children's lives. This helps children to become settled and start making progress. Children are supported to spend time with people that are important to them, and staff will go with them if needed to ensure that this is both enjoyable for all and safe. One parent said, 'There are no words can express my gratitude and admiration.'

Local authority plans for one child who has lived at the home for almost one month were not on file. Despite the efforts of the manager to escalate concerns, there is no up-to-date care plan. As a result, the manager has not been able to ensure the local

authority plan informs the child's relevant plans. This hinders good care planning. The staff have not implemented a reward system for children. This reduces the opportunities for children's achievements to be recognised and celebrated.

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

Multi-agency working with partner agencies is a real strength in this home. Children are safer because staff see themselves as an integral part of the larger network around the child. They communicate any concerns clearly and promptly with partner agencies, ensuring that their approach to behaviours of concern is regularly reviewed. Staff are tenacious. Their approach to multi-agency working enables them to act at the earliest opportunity to keep children safe.

Children have individual risk assessments. These capture the risks and vulnerabilities for each child. Managers continually review how they can strengthen and improve the quality of risk assessments. It is evident that staff know the children exceptionally well. Children's needs are at the forefront of everyday practice.

Allegations against staff are taken very seriously. Following incidents, one child has made allegations about staff. The child has often withdrawn these soon afterwards. The manager ensures that all allegations are investigated thoroughly and has worked closely with the child's social worker and the local authority designated officer. This ensures that there is transparency regarding practice. However, on one occasion, Ofsted has not been alerted as required by regulation. This impairs the regulator's oversight in reviewing notifications and taking necessary action to ensure the safety of children.

Staff offer reassurance when children become anxious and upset. When children's behaviour becomes challenging for staff to manage, they use a range of techniques to help children calm. For one child, there has been a high number of restraints used to ensure their safety. The manager has worked with a range of external specialists to look at different ideas and solutions to introducing a restraint reduction plan. This is in its infancy but appears to have been effective. Holding a child is only used as a last resort after all other options have been tried and is needed to keep the child safe.

Children know how to complain if they are unhappy with any aspect of their care. One child made a complaint, which has been responded to quickly. There is evidence of how this has been used to develop the service and improve outcomes for children.

There have been five medication errors since the last inspection, despite managers strengthening the procedures and guidance for staff to follow. This has resulted in children not always having their medication administered in line with instructions. All staff have been retrained in this area, and their competencies have been assessed.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and the manager have a vision for the home and lead by example. The manager is supportive and caring towards the children and staff. He understands the strengths and the areas that need further development. Staff say they feel valued by the manager, and this helps to keep them motivated.

There is sufficient staffing to provide good care for children. The team has experienced some changes since the last inspection. However, the core members of staff who have the relevant skills, knowledge and experience have remained to support children.

Staff training is very good. All staff are trained to meet the needs of each child. When new needs for children emerge, staff are provided with additional training. Staff are offered good development opportunities in the home and the wider organisation. They value the opportunities to take on additional responsibilities and learn new skills.

The manager ensures that staff receive regular supervision. However, not all records of supervision meetings provide evidence of opportunities for staff to reflect on their practice and enable staff performance to be effectively monitored. This hinders staff development.

The manager's monitoring systems have improved since the last inspection. Using these systems, he has direct oversight of all the work undertaken with children. The manager is always keen to improve the practice in the home and uses audits and feedback to continually seek to improve the service and children's experiences.

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 care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that arrangements are in place to—</p> <p>manage and review the placement of each child in the home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a) (2)(b)(ii))</p> <p>This specifically relates to managers ensuring that the child's care plan is accurate and up to date.</p>	9 November 2023
<p>The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home.</p> <p>In particular the registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>medicines kept in the home are stored in a secure place so as to prevent any child from having unsupervised access to them;</p> <p>medicine which is prescribed for a child is administered as prescribed to the child for whom it is prescribed and to no other child;</p> <p>a record is kept of the administration of medicine to each child. (Regulation 23 (1)(2)(a)(b)(c))</p> <p>This specifically relates to recurring medication errors in the home. Managers must ensure that staff follow policies and procedures when administering medication, to avoid errors occurring.</p>	9 November 2023

This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p> <p>there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there;</p> <p>there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(c)(e))</p>	9 November 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff recognise and celebrate the achievements of the children. ('Guide to Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', Page 31, 6.7)
- The registered person should have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practise from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61 paragraph 13.2)

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: 1278966

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: Smoothstone Care & Education Limited

Registered provider address: Datum House, Electra Way, Crewe CW1 6ZF

Responsible individual: Raymond Scales

Registered manager: Jonathan Bunting

Inspector

Zoey Lee, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023