

1278966

Registered provider: Smoothstone Care & Education Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is privately owned and is registered to care for up to six children who may have learning disabilities.

Since the last inspection, one child has moved out of the home and two children have moved in. There were four children and one young person living at the home at the time of the inspection. All children were seen and spoken to by the inspector.

The manager is registered with Ofsted.

There is a school on the same site, which the children attend. Inspectors only inspected the social care provision on this site.

Inspection dates: 17 and 19 March 2025

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: 24 October 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/10/2023	Full	Good
08/11/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
08/02/2022	Full	Good
06/11/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children receive individualised care. Staff know children well and show warmth and care. Adaptations to the home enhance children's experiences, such as a jungle room to help with emotional regulation and a purpose-built wet room, making showering more accessible for one child with mobility needs. Children's bedrooms are personalised and reflect their likes, interests and personalities. Children therefore, have a sense of belonging and feel valued and cared for.

Staff have regular discussions with children, helping them to talk about and process their feelings and experiences. For one child, this has improved their understanding and verbal communication skills and no longer relies on the use of symbols and signs. However, children's information is not always recorded in a way that is non-stigmatising and is an area for development.

Children do well in education considering their starting points. The manager and staff communicate effectively with teachers, ensuring children's needs are known and well supported. Staff have helped one child who was out of education to return to school full time and is preparing for their year eleven exams. This is commendable.

Children enjoy good health. Children are encouraged and incentivised to live a healthy lifestyle through diet, exercise and self-care. One child who struggled with their personal care has made significant progress and all children are eating a wider variety of nutritious foods. Children are helped to live fulfilled lives and have a 'can do' attitude. For example, one child with cerebral palsy enjoys a range of regular activities such as swimming, army cadets and going to the gym. As a result, children's overall health and wellbeing improve.

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

Staff keep children safe. Staff understand the risks children can be exposed to. Safety plans are created and reviewed in collaboration with other professionals, such as the local authority designated officer and social workers. Plans are updated regularly, ensuring staff have the most up to date information. This is an effective approach to safeguarding.

Staff respond well to behaviours that are difficult to manage, such as verbal and physical aggression. Staff use effective strategies that help children to regulate their emotions, such as helpful known phrases or taking children for a drive. Children benefit from consistent boundaries and routines, and systems of rewards and incentives encourage children to make more positive choices.

Staff teach children how to behave appropriately. Children receive suitable consequences if they make the wrong choices, such as harming a peer or causing damage. Children are

consulted in the process, and each consequence is reviewed by the manager. Consequences are restorative in nature and are effective in helping children to learn.

Staff physically intervene as a last resort to keep children and staff safe. The least force and measure are used. Staff and children are spoken to afterwards to support their wellbeing. The manager reviews each event and considers what is going on for the child. Learning is used to inform practice and prevent further incidents. For one child, there has been a reduction in the need for staff to physically intervene when they are distressed.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is a strong leader and carries a calm and nurturing presence. Staff feel well supported and enjoy working at the home. Staff have supportive relationships with each other, helping to provide a harmonious familial environment for children.

The manager has positive relationships with other professionals and parents. He communicates effectively and works well in collaboration. He is a strong advocate for children and ensures decisions made are in children's best interests. Feedback from external stakeholders is unanimously positive.

Staff are well trained and feel competent in their role. Staff receive training in relation to children's specific needs such as cerebral palsy, autism spectrum disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

The manager has effective oversight and quality assurance systems in place. He knows what is happening in the home daily. Internal and external audits are regularly undertaken, and any shortfalls are promptly addressed. Learning from incidents is used to improve practice. This helps to maintain good standards of care. However, the manager does not actively seek feedback from external stakeholders. This is a missed opportunity to gain independent scrutiny of the home.

Staff receive regular supervision. These include important topics such as staff well-being, safeguarding matters and the care of children. Staff do not yet have enough opportunity to reflect on their practice.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping, and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person must 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)

This recommendation was made at the last inspection and is restated.

- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)

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

Emma Dacres, social care inspector

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