

# 2727134

Registered provider: Smooth Stone 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 3 children who may have learning disabilities.

There were 3 children living at the home at the time of the inspection. The inspector spoke with both children.

The manager registered with Ofsted December 2025 and is suitably qualified.

### Inspection dates: 11 and 12 February 2026

**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:** 17 December 2024

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 17/12/2024      | Full            | Good                 |
| 11/03/2024      | Full            | Good                 |

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Children benefit from living in a home that is warm, welcoming and exceptionally well presented. The decor is of a high standard, and the atmosphere is homely and nurturing. Personal touches are evident throughout, with photos and children's artwork that celebrate their achievements. Bedrooms are highly individualised, reflecting children's personalities and interests. One child's bedroom has just been redecorated and reflects the ideas, colours and inspiration from the mood board the child designed.

Children who are new to the home are always welcomed with sensitivity and careful planning. The transition process is meticulously planned, ensuring that all of their needs are understood and met. This approach represents good practice and supports smooth, well-managed moves into the home.

Children are making meaningful progress relative to their individual starting points. Families consistently commend the progress made by children. Staff understand the importance of supporting children to develop essential life skills. There has been notable advancement in children's independence, with children now able to complete some tasks independently with reduced staff support.

Staff provide consistent support to help children engage in education. They work closely with education providers when children experience difficulties attending school. One child's attendance has improved since moving into the home. The manager has also delivered training and shared resources with one school, strengthening their understanding of the strategies used in the home to support the child. This has helped the child manage daily transitions into school more successfully and ensured that they have consistent access to education and learning.

Children are healthy, and staff support them to attend medical appointments and maintain a healthy lifestyle, ensuring that they eat a healthy, nutritious and balanced diet. When children have not wanted to attend appointments, staff have worked incredibly hard to ensure that children understand the importance of looking after their health and enabling them to overcome associated phobias and fears.

Staff actively encourage children to take part in a range of new experiences and activities that nurture their talents and interests. For example, both children are now members of a local inclusive rugby team. Children are also supported to socialise with their peers, helping them build relationships, develop independence and gain a strong sense of achievement and self-worth.

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

Children develop strong, trusting relationships with staff, which form the foundation for their progress and emotional security. Staff know the children well and respond to their

individual needs. Following incidents, staff engage children in meaningful conversations that help children to reflect on their behaviour and build emotional resilience. This restorative approach supports children to better understand their feelings and develop more positive coping strategies.

Staff are aware of how to keep children safe. However, children's assessments do not identify all known risks and include inaccurate information. This prevents clear guidance being provided to staff to meet children's needs. However, due to improved communication amongst the staff team, staff are able to evidence sound knowledge of the correct plans. This has ensured a consistent approach to the care provided despite plans not being up to date.

Staff only physically intervene with children as a last resort. This is to prevent children from harming themselves and others. However, during a recent incident, staff were hesitant in using physical intervention techniques, which resulted in the incident continuing to escalate. Leaders and managers have met with the team to reflect on this incident, and lessons have been learnt to strengthen staff confidence and skillset in this area.

Leaders act promptly when a child raises an allegation or concern. They undertake thorough, effective investigations and ensure the child is informed of the outcome. This transparent approach reassures children that their voice matters and that they are both valued and heard.

Errors have been made with the medication administering procedures. The manager has been quick to investigate each incident. Changes to practice have been implemented to avoid reoccurrence and staff have received additional training and support. All staff are trained in medication administration and undertake an annual competency assessment meaning the likelihood of further errors is reduced.

The location risk assessment provides staff with sufficient information to safeguard children from risks in the community. However, the manager has not consulted relevant people about the appropriateness of the location of the home and any risks associated with the area.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The home has been through an unsettled period due to changes in the management team and the instability of staffing. This has recently settled with the appointment of a new manager, providing the team with the required direction, support and guidance. The remaining staff vacancies have now been appointed to, and staff are being used from the sister home until safer recruitment checks are completed, reducing the use of agency staff members.

The manager demonstrates a passion and commitment to the children in her care and to the overall environment of the home. Her experience in the field is evident in the way she leads the team, bringing knowledge and expertise to the role. The manager is ably

supported by a dedicated deputy manager, who shares her commitment to delivering high quality care and supporting the staff. Leaders have a visible presence in the home and provide support to the manager in her practice.

The manager completes regular audits. However staffing shortages led to the delay of a physical intervention record being reviewed. As a result, information was not shared with relevant professionals in a timely manner. Leaders and managers have taken action to rectify this.

Staff benefit from regular, reflective and purposeful team meetings. These meetings cover a wide range of topics relevant to the children living in the home and provide an important forum for communication, idea-sharing, and constructive challenge. This supports staff to develop professionally and maintain good quality practice. Therapeutic parenting approaches are increasingly becoming a consistent feature of practice within the home.

Supervision for staff is conducted on a monthly basis, with sessions being clearly recorded. These supervision sessions are structured, with actions and targets being set for each staff member. The manager recognises the emotional impact of the work and ensures that staff well-being is actively supported.

Training is well-managed, with both core training and targeted training to meet children's needs. New staff receive a thorough induction and ongoing support, helping them to deliver consistent, well-informed care.

The management team is constantly seeking new ways to celebrate children's achievements and provide them with enriching experiences. While some initiatives are still in the early stages, they demonstrate a forward-thinking and child-centred approach that is steadily becoming embedded across the home.

## 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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child;</p> <p>have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(b))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that plans and assessments are updated to reflect known risks and provide clear guidance to staff.</p> <p>Ensure that staff are confident in applying behaviour management strategies when this is required.</p> | <p>16 March 2026</p> |
| <p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p>   | <p>16 March 2026</p> |

|  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h))</p> <p>In particular, ensure there is thorough oversight of all areas of care and associated records in the home.</p>  |                      |
| <p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes—</p> <p>the name of the child;</p> <p>details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure;</p> <p>the date, time and location of the use of the measure;</p> <p>a description of the measure and its duration;</p> <p>details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure;</p> <p>the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used;</p> <p>the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and</p> <p>a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure;</p> <p>within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")—</p> <p>has spoken to the user about the measure; and</p> <p>has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and</p> | <p>16 March 2026</p> |

within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure.  
(Regulation 35 (3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)(iv))

In particular, ensure that records of physical intervention are made following any incident of restraint and include all required information. It also relates to the manager reviewing this and sharing relevant information with professionals in a timely manner.

## Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that they consult with relevant professional when they conduct the annual review of premises. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.1)

## 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:** 2727134

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Smooth Stone Care & Education Limited

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

**Responsible individual:** Raymond Scales

**Registered manager:** Georgina Morgan

## Inspector

Zoey Lee, Social Care Inspector

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