

SC044259

Registered provider: Child First Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home provides care for up to five children who have had difficulties with family relationships and dynamics and who may have experienced significant trauma in their lives.

Staff are referred to by each other and the children as 'adults'. Key-work sessions and meetings are called 'catch-ups', so this language is reflected in the report.

The manager registered with Ofsted in July 2019.

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 March 2024

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: 9 January 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/01/2023	Full	Good
02/02/2022	Full	Outstanding
18/06/2019	Full	Good
02/05/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children at this home are cared for by thoughtful adults, who are confident and knowledgeable about children's needs. Adults are well attuned to children and take care to respond to both verbal and behavioural communication. This helps children to feel understood and reduces the likelihood of situations escalating. Adults set boundaries for behaviour but are also flexible in their approach, which supports children to make positive choices and reduces their anxieties when they are anxious.

Children are making good progress. Children receive support with managing relationships and developing their social skills, as well as developing their independence skills. They actively participate in the community of the home, such as cooking meals and caring for the visiting dogs. The progress that children make is not always a linear journey, but the adults remain committed to the welfare and progression of each child.

External professionals report positively about the communication from the adults and say that they feel both included and well informed. One professional said, 'The adults are very proactive. I trust them and they are quick to respond.' This partnership working ensures that there is a shared approach to managing risks and planning children's care.

Children are encouraged to try things and have new experiences. One child tried out a gaming club at school. Another child spoke about her horse-riding lessons and how her riding skills and equine knowledge have advanced. These experiences enable children to increase their self-esteem and discover new talents.

Adults value the importance of creating a relaxing and fun environment. The home's decor feels fresh and in keeping with children's interests. An overhaul of the games room is being undertaken in response to feedback from children. There are also plans to refurbish the upstairs washroom facilities and install an additional shower to reduce waiting time for children getting ready in the morning.

Children have access to meaningful learning opportunities that meet their needs. When children are not attending mainstream education, there are bespoke plans in place to ensure that they have a consistent routine and access learning in a positive way. Efforts are made by the provider to liaise with the local authority and virtual school to secure school placements for children new to the home. When children are due to sit exams, they receive additional support to study and to plan their time, so the process does not feel overwhelming.

When children have an education, health and care plan, adults understand the child's needs and support them accordingly. However, in at least one example, a copy of the child's plan is not in their file for adults to refer to if required.

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

The home environment is safe for children and adults care for them effectively. Children say that they feel safe and that they get on well with adults.

Detailed plans provide clear guidance for adults when there are difficult times. There are some occasions when children need to be held by adults, but the use of such intervention is always proportionate and followed up appropriately. Children are helped by adults to understand their behaviours and are encouraged to use positive strategies, such as talking about their feelings, to reduce the likelihood of future occurrences.

Children do not often go missing or leave the home without informing adults. Since the last inspection, the registered manager has taken steps to ensure that there is an increased level of professional curiosity when this does occur.

Consequences for behaviour are fair and focus on developing children's insight into their behaviours. Conversations are used to reaffirm boundaries and develop children's understanding of their vulnerabilities, as well as to help them to develop empathy.

Children explore their emotional responses and relationships in regular catch-ups with adults. When appropriate, the provider has sought specific interventions to help children to improve their emotional literacy and repair relationships. One child has benefited from family therapy and has been reunified with his parent. Adults remain proactive in supporting him to settle back at home, through emotional and practical outreach.

Children's moves on from the home are mainly well considered and planned. Children who have left are encouraged to remain in contact with adults. Consequently, children benefit from relationships that they have formed. When children move into the home, consideration is given to the adults' skillset and children are well prepared for receiving a new member of the household. There was one occasion when it would have been beneficial to have scrutinised the referral information more robustly to ensure that the child's needs could be fully met. The home's leaders identified this and responded appropriately, although this resulted in the child's placement ending after only a brief stay.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is a calm and skilled leader. She recognises the home's strengths and areas for development and has taken steps to nurture the adult team to improve cohesion and retention. She provides adults with regular feedback to support their learning and acknowledges good practice. By ensuring the team is stronger and more reflective, the manager ensures that children receive consistent and good-quality care.

Leaders and managers have good relationships with the children, and they use their knowledge to support adults effectively. When there are difficult times, the manager is sensitive and assertive in her approach to prompting adults to think about the opportunities for learning that have arisen. However, this does not always include reviewing and learning from disruptions and placement breakdowns.

The manager and her deputies provide high-quality supervision. They have challenging and reflective conversations with adults that promote the welfare and progress of children. This is also reflected in appraisals, which lay out clear plans for adults' development.

Adults talk positively about the support that they receive during induction and the early stages of their time working in the home. One adult described the experience as 'friendly and supportive', observing that adults are 'devoted to making a difference' and that 'children are listened to'.

Adults have access to training that supports their understanding of children and bolsters their existing skill base. They share their expertise with one another for the benefit of children. One adult prepared workshops for her colleagues based on her experience in mental health services, to help increase their knowledge around one child's behaviours.

Children's views are captured effectively in the regular house and individual catch-ups. When children express a wish in relation to their care planning, this is taken seriously. Adults advocate on their behalf to ensure that the local authority is aware and that there is a satisfactory response. Children also make use of independent advocacy, which provides an additional opportunity for them to feel heard.

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 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 promotes their welfare.</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, the registered manager should anticipate difficulties and review incidents, such as learning from disruptions and placement breakdowns, and share the learning with the adult team. The registered manager should ensure that they proactively implement lessons learned to sustain good practice.</p>	<p>12 June 2024</p>

Recommendation

- The registered person should challenge (under regulation 5(c)) any placing authority which asks them to accept a child in the absence of a complete and current relevant plan, as the expectation that a placement of a child without the necessary information would go ahead (in circumstances other than an emergency) is inadequate in relation to their role. It is essential that homes understand what will be required of them before they accept responsibility for a child’s placement, to avoid disruption and instability for the child in future and for other children in the home. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 56, paragraph 11.5)

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: SC044259

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Child First Limited

Registered provider address: 62 The Street, Rustington, West Sussex BN16 3RN

Responsible individual: Matthew Langley

Registered manager: Sarah Townsend

Inspector

Tash Williams, Social Care Inspector

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