

1275569

Registered provider: The Mulberry Bush Organisation Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home provides an integrated combination of residential therapeutic care, treatment and education for children of primary school age with social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

The home is made up of five separate houses, providing care for children for either 38 or 52 weeks a year while they attend the school on the same site. At the time of the inspection, 21 children were living at the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted on 18 June 2018.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Inspection dates: 28 to 30 January 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	outstanding
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 4 July 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/07/2023	Full	Good
20/12/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
21/04/2021	Full	Outstanding
05/11/2019	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children make positive progress from their starting points and benefit from a wide range of direct and indirect therapeutic interventions. The experience of living at the home enhances children's life chances and enables them to better understand themselves.

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of children's needs and work together to develop well-informed strategies to provide individualised support and care. There is a strong focus on helping children to understand the impact of their behaviours on themselves and others. Staff implement this in a restorative, non-blaming way which promotes acceptance and respect.

Children's health needs are well supported, and they receive the care and support that they require. The management team has increased the scrutiny and oversight of children's health and well-being and uses identified themes to better understand children's care needs. In addition to this, continually developing relationships with external agencies, such as child and adolescent mental health services, ensures that additional specialist needs are promptly explored.

Staff are motivated to support children to better understand their feelings and help them to develop connections between their emotions and physical well-being. Staff help children to name their emotions and use objects of reference to help children to understand what is happening in their bodies. This approach promotes strong relationships and mutual understanding between staff and children.

Children benefit from a multidisciplinary approach where staff from across the whole school work in unison to provide children with consistent support. Children also benefit from a family practitioner who helps to ensure that parents, carers and families are included in day-to-day decision-making.

Staff have created child-friendly environments which are homely and well decorated. This includes regular adaptations in accordance with children's wishes and feelings, and photos of children enjoying positive experiences. This promotes a strong sense of belonging and identity for children.

Some children have raised concerns about the quality of the food that they receive. Although the leadership team has implemented some strategies to explore this further, these have not been consistent. In addition, the variation in evening mealtimes can impact on the quality and warmth of the food provided.

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

All children are kept safe from harm. Changes in the leadership team have increased the scrutiny and monitoring of children's well-being.

Leaders and managers are committed to reducing the frequency of physical restraint and to ensuring that holds are no more restrictive than they need to be. Positively, they have phased out the use of 'advanced holds'. Despite this, the frequency of incidents that result in physical restraints remains high. The leadership team is aware of this and continues to review this area of practice to ensure that children receive the best support. Leaders routinely invite external scrutiny from families and professionals to gain their views and promote a mutual approach to providing safe care.

While there is a strong focus on listening to children's views when investigating complaints and allegations, the process for investigating allegations and complaints is different. All investigations prioritise safeguarding the child. However, the differing approaches have not always been child-friendly.

Staff understand children and work hard to ensure that they get the right support. In an isolated example, staff developed a strategy to support one child, but this was not clearly recorded in the child's plans. The measure may impact on the child's liberty if this is not carefully monitored and reviewed.

Children benefit from a range of therapeutic support and can access drama therapy, music therapy, psychotherapy and other support including speech and language therapy and life-story work in accordance with their plans. Leaders and managers have embedded a therapeutic culture. This means that children benefit from individualised care from a network of adults who know them well.

There are comprehensive systems for ensuring that the site is safe and maintained to a high standard. Any repairs and general maintenance are carried out in a timely manner.

Despite otherwise good safeguarding practice, leaders do not always ensure that all necessary checks are completed as part of safer recruitment processes. In particular, the reasons why potential employees left previous posts involving any work with children or vulnerable adults are not always explored adequately.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders and managers have embedded an aspirational culture and are focused on providing the best quality care to children. The provider has a unique approach that it has developed through research and professional curiosity, and the experience of moving to the home is transformative for most children. Many children make sustained progress over time and the leadership team can evidence the positive impact that their approach has had.

The leadership team has been strengthened since the last inspection. This has led to increased scrutiny and oversight of children's well-being and progress. This has had a positive impact on children and staff. The registered manager has a clear action plan to support further development.

Staff feel valued and are highly complimentary of the support that they receive from the management team. Many staff have worked in the provision for significant periods of time and value the privileged position that they hold in a community of adults seeking the best outcomes for children. They also highlight the shared sense of responsibility and equality, irrespective of the individual staff member's experience and professional status.

The admissions process is carefully managed and focused on developing a detailed understanding of children's lives. The leadership team recognises that the experience of moving to the home may be difficult for some children. Consequently, they ensure that children are well supported.

Leaders and staff work very closely with external professionals and families to ensure that adults who know children well continue to be an important and valued part of their lives. Staff recognise the significant importance of children's history and the relationship this may have on children's presenting needs. Staff seek to understand this in a sensitive, non-blaming manner which values the unique experience of each child.

The leadership team places important emphasis on equality and diversity, and staff benefit from a substantial network of practical and emotional support. This includes direct supervision and a variety of informal and formal reflective opportunities. Consequently, staff work in a transparent and reflective manner and are confident to share the impact that their work may have on them.

Staff have access to high-quality training that equips them to meet the needs of the children that they are looking after. Leaders and managers encourage staff to explore their professional interests and recognise the important role that they play in the development of the service.

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
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(d)) In particular, the registered provider must ensure they have taken all reasonable steps to verify the employment history and reasons for leaving previous posts for all care staff who seek to work in the home.	31 January 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that any behaviour management strategies to support children are clearly recorded in children's plans and regularly reviewed. All staff involved in supporting the child should fully understand the reason for the strategy and the outcome required. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the Quality Standards', page 46, paragraph 9.34)
- The registered person should ensure that all children receive a healthy, balanced and nutritious diet and that any internal review systems about the quality of food are

consistent and supported by the wishes and feelings of children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the Quality Standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

- The registered person should ensure that there is a consistent approach to determine what happens if a child raises a concern about an adult who is supporting them. Any approaches should be child-centred and continue to ensure that the safety of children is the paramount consideration. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the Quality Standards', page 44, paragraph 9.17)

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: 1275569

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: The Mulberry Bush Organisation Ltd

Responsible individual: Lee Wright

Registered manager: Claire McCarthy

Inspectors

Ashley Edwards, Social Care Regulatory Inspector (Lead)
Helen Simmons, Regulatory Inspection Manager

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