

1277158

Registered provider: Oaktree Childcare Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a private provider. It offers care for up to two children who may experience social and emotional difficulties and/or have learning disabilities.

At the time of this inspection, no children were living in the home.

A new interim manager is in post. They have applied to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 October 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 22 July 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/07/2024	Full	Inadequate
19/12/2023	Full	Good
13/09/2022	Full	Good
28/03/2022	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

One child lived in the home for a very short period and had a poor experience of moving on from the home. Options for stabilising the child's placement in the home were not explored by leaders and managers with the child's placing authority. As a result, the child experienced a sense of rejection and was not provided with an opportunity to visit a new home and meet new carers before moving. However, the move for another child was positive and the child was well supported to move on. This included visits by staff to their new home to help them settle. When children move into the home, they are welcomed sensitively and with care. Where possible, staff visit the children beforehand, and children can visit the home and meet staff.

Children have inconsistent experiences of behaviour management support by staff in the home. One child received regular praise and rewards to encourage positive behaviour. However, for another child, no praise or rewards were given. There are limited discussions with the children to help them develop their knowledge of appropriate behaviour.

Children's identity needs are well considered. For one child, this included leaders and managers escalating their concerns to the child's placing authority when the child's time with the people who are important to them was not being promoted.

Children who have lived in the home have enjoyed positive relationships with staff. Staff speak about children with care and affection. Staff take the children out to enjoy activities, which supports in relationship-building.

Staff ensure that children's health needs are met. There are clear plans in place with guidance for staff to follow. Staff support children to attend regular routine and specialist health appointments. Staff cook healthy, balanced meals and encourage physical activities. This supports the children to lead a healthy lifestyle.

When barriers to attending education are identified, the manager works with external agencies to find a solution that works best for the individual child. This includes the manager advocating on the children's behalf and escalating concerns when the children's needs are not being met.

The home has undergone full redecoration and is a warm and welcoming environment.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Leaders and managers have not ensured that staff have the necessary knowledge and skills to respond to significant behavioural incidents in the home, particularly when

unknown behaviours arise. Before one child moved on from the home, there were three significant behavioural incidents in three days. Staff were slow to respond to unfamiliar escalating behaviours, and limited de-escalation strategies were used. During one incident, staff did not follow the child's individual support plan and did not carry out an effective search of the child's bedroom to prevent further escalation.

When staff have carried out searches of the child's bedroom, actions taken by staff to dispose of harmful items found are not recorded. The new manager is fully aware of the shortfalls in staff practice and has clear plans in place to address these.

Children's individual risk assessments identify known risks to children and are supported by information from their placing authorities. Staff understand the risks associated when children are misusing substances or being criminally exploited. However, staff do not always use their professional curiosity when considering these risks, and they sometimes make assumptions. Staff did not explore comments made by one child around the distribution of substances. There was limited direct work carried out with the child to help reduce community associated risks.

Consequences are rarely used. When they are used, they are appropriate and are proportionate to the behaviour displayed. There have been no occasions when children have been physically held by staff.

The manager has implemented new systems for the recording and monitoring of children's medication. This is not yet fully embedded into practice.

When complaints have arisen, these have been managed efficiently and appropriately. Recordings of complaints demonstrate actions taken by the manager to resolve issues and evidence clear rationale for decision-making.

There have been no occasions when children have been missing from the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

There have been significant changes in the management of the home. There has not been a consistent manager since April 2024. A new manager has been in post since 25 September 2024 and has applied to register with Ofsted. He has a good understanding of the strengths and areas of development for the home. The manager has implemented new monitoring and review systems, which has improved their overall oversight of the home. However, these systems are not yet fully embedded into practice.

There is an inconsistent approach to multi-agency working. The previous manager has advocated on behalf of the children when he felt that the children's needs were not being met. However, the previous manager did not share one safeguarding concern with a child's placing authority that arose at the time the child moved on from the home. Senior managers have now taken action and reported this safeguarding concern to the relevant professionals.

Leaders and managers do not always follow safer recruitment processes. Leaders and managers did not ensure that references were verbally verified for one member of staff before they started to work in the home. This does not ensure that only suitable people work with children in the home.

Staff do not receive regular one-to-one supervision. This means that staff do not have regular opportunities to discuss their development needs or reflect on their care of the children. However, group supervision sessions take place regularly to reflect on incidents that occur in the home. Team meetings take place regularly and are well attended. The new manager has plans in place to use future team meetings and supervision sessions to discuss their care of the children and to test staff's knowledge, using scenarios and quizzes.

Before children come to live at the home, the manager carries out a risk assessment. This identifies known risks for the child and considers the staff's skills and experience to meet their needs. The manager includes consultation with the child's placing authority and external professionals to inform the assessment. As a result, all matching considerations for the child are appropriately evaluated.

Staff say that they enjoy coming to work and describe 'loving' their jobs. Staff say that they feel supported by leaders and managers but acknowledge the challenges of not having a consistent manager to lead the team. Staff say that they are looking forward to having clear direction and leadership from the new manager, who has a clear vision for 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
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— 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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; 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; and that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)(d))	9 November 2024

The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on—

mutual respect and trust;

an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and

positive responses to other children and adults.

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—

that staff—

meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans;

help each child to develop socially aware behaviour;

encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding;

help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone;

communicate to each child expectations about the child's behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding;

help each child to understand, in a way that is appropriate according to the child's age and understanding, personal, sexual and social relationships, and how those relationships can be supportive or harmful;

help each child to develop the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitative or harmful relationship;

strive to gain each child's respect and trust;

understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children;

9 November 2024

are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same; and de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(ix)(x)(xi))	
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)(c))	9 November 2024
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— the individual is of integrity and good character; the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform; and 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)(a)(b)(d))	9 November 2024
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months.	9 March 2025

In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating—

the quality of care provided for children;

the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and

any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children.

After completing a quality of care review, the registered person must produce a written report about the quality of care review and the actions which the registered person intends to take as a result of the quality of care review ("the quality of care review report").

The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff.

(Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c) (3) (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: 1277158

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Oaktree Childcare Limited

Registered provider address: Ground Floor, Seneca House, Links Point, Amy Johnson Way, Blackpool, Lancashire FY4 2FF

Responsible individual: Lee Prescott

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Leanne Carr, Social Care Inspector
Justina Henry, Social Care Inspector

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