

2502918

Registered provider: Protea Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned residential home is registered to care for two children aged eight to 18 years who may have social, emotional, mental health or learning needs.

The manager was registered in June 2021 and has the required level 5 qualification.

Due to COVID 19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 19 October 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 6 to 7 July 2021

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	requires improvement to be 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: 12 March 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/03/2020	Interim	Improved effectiveness
30/09/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The two children living in this home moved in recently. They have both adjusted well to living in residential care. One child stated that he is happy in the home and showed the inspector his bedroom. He beamed with pride as he said, 'It feels like a family here.'

The children have developed good relationships with the staff and they are well cared for. They have participated in a wide range of creative activities. This is despite the limitations due to local and national lockdowns. The activities children have undertaken with the staff have helped to develop good and positive relationships.

Children's meetings take place weekly. The staff are creative in using these as learning experiences for the children. They discuss varied and interesting topics. Meetings also canvass children's views on the past week and make plans for the week ahead. Children's views get expressed through meetings, children's key-work sessions and general conversations.

Children are participating in home-based learning, through a blend of formal and online tuition. The children complete educational worksheets and activities with staff to enhance learning. Staff have tried to ensure children experience the same routine as in school. However, home education cannot provide the benefits, including socialisation, that come from school attendance. Managers have repeatedly remonstrated with the relevant agencies for appropriate provisions to be secured for children. However, there has been delay and drift and the right educational placement has not been given sufficient priority.

The children are healthy and attend routine medical check-ups. Children also attend, with the support of staff, specialist appointments such as medication reviews. Staff work closely with the placing local authorities to ensure the children receive any additional support they may need, such as psychological support.

Children are supported and encouraged to spend time with their families. This includes, at times, travelling long distances to meet family members. A parent spoke positively about staff being committed to making sure that she and her child spent valuable time together. She also felt welcomed in the home when visiting her child. Children benefit from the manager and staff working with families and involved professionals.

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

Since the last inspection, there have been several incidents of children being absent from the home without the agreement of staff. These incidents primarily related to

one child who has subsequently moved. The missing-from-home episodes were concerning because the child was subject to deprivation of liberty safeguards and so had an increased staffing ratio. These concerns were investigated by leaders to learn valuable lessons. Involved agencies, such as the police, have commended the staff in managing some difficult incidents while demonstrating care and commitment to children.

Staff consistently try to put firm behavioural boundaries in place, but these are tested by children. However, despite these boundaries, children still occasionally go missing. One child said he and another child 'get bored and run off'. There is concern that the children are placing themselves at risk of exploitation while out unaccompanied. These concerns have been escalated to the relevant professionals and safety planning meetings take place. Staff are working with the children to help them recognise the risks they face while missing from home.

There have been some incidents of aggression towards staff. The relevant local authorities have differing views about what they deem as appropriate responses to incidents. The manager is working with these authorities to agree effective strategies to manage behaviour. The manager wants to make certain that staff feel supported while not unduly criminalising children through police action.

Staff have recently organised trips to ensure that the children have a short break from the home and time away from each other. The manager and staff believe that this time apart will help the children reflect on their behaviour and develop alternative strategies to manage strong emotions. Staff are working with the children to improve the children's ability to self-regulate and identify coping strategies to manage overwhelming feelings. These additional strategies are proving beneficial in reducing the number of incidents.

Children's risk assessments have been improved. They are now completed and updated to ensure that they reflect known and current risks. Some records, such as missing-from-care logs, lack detail that should provide clarity on when a child was last seen prior to being reported as missing.

The creative use of rewards and reparation is good. For example, a child wrote a restorative letter to a neighbour following a recent complaint. This teaches children how to take responsibility for their actions. It is also helping to rebuild important relationships with neighbours.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager started her role with a clear vision for the home. She is proactively identifying areas for ongoing development and improvement. Staff say they feel supported and helped by the manager and that they like the 'family feel' she has created since her arrival.

The leaders want the best for the children and staff. They are actively seeking to develop the team and so have promoted staff who are demonstrating strong

potential. But their aspirations for the children are being hindered by the lack of educational placements for children. This is being robustly tackled by the manager.

The home is in a culturally diverse area and the staff team reflects this diversity. The staff work with the children to recognise and value difference. In a recent example, the Euros football tournament was used to support researching countries as part of schoolwork.

The manager is continually assessing how children are progressing and ensures that this is reflected in their relevant plans. Despite challenges, staff persevere and keep children's welfare their main focus.

Some staff are new to this work and would benefit from increased supervision sessions during their probation. This would assist staff to better understand their role and provide space to reflect on their care practice, for example, reflecting on and learning from difficult incidents.

There are some aspects of recording that would benefit from additional scrutiny by the manager. Some documents incorrectly referred to a different child or staff member. Additional reviewing processes would strengthen this process and help eliminate mistakes.

The manager and staff ensure that relationships with external professionals and family members are positive. However, some feedback provided has been variable in relation to the quality of these relationships. Leaders are examining their approach to responding to feedback and comments from families and professionals, to give confidence that the care provided to children is good. Leaders and the manager recognise the need to challenge professionals who are not yet delivering services, such as schooling, for children. Leaders, the manager and staff are strong advocates for children and strive to ensure children have the right services in place that will help them make progress and succeed.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should escalate concerns about the extensive delays in identifying appropriate educational provision for children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 11, paragraph 2.4)
- The registered person should ensure staff act as champions for their children, expecting nothing less than a good parent would. The registered person should consider the use of an independent advocate (see paragraph 4.16) if the child's needs are not being met. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 12, paragraph 2.8)
- The registered person should ensure that staff receive supervision more regularly when in their probation period and/or when concerns arise. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- The registered person should ensure that the steps taken to manage the day-to-day risks to children, and/or staff, are reviewed regularly. This includes working with children to help them understand how to keep themselves and others safe. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraphs 9.5 & 9.7)
- The registered person should ensure that records are completed fully, with attention to detail and accuracy. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: 2502918

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Protea Care Limited

Registered provider address: 317 Horn Lane, London W3 0BU

Responsible individual: Bon Rogers

Registered manager: Laura Davies

Inspector

Sonia Hay, Social Care Inspector

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