

2510199

Registered provider: St Christopher's Fellowship

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is operated by a registered charity. It can provide care for up to four children who have social and emotional difficulties.

There is a registered manager who is qualified and experienced.

Inspection date: 20 September 2023

Date of last inspection: 9 May 2023

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspectors evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Outcome from the inspection

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

Findings from the inspection

This assurance inspection was completed due to concerns Ofsted had received in relation to the care of children.

At the time of inspection, one child lived at the home. Since the previous inspection, two children moved out of the home in an unplanned manner. This was earlier than planned and due to concerns that their individual needs could not be met safely in the home. Another child successfully returned to live with their family. Staff have continued to support the child through outreach work. This has supported the child's family to continue to meet the child's medical needs.

Children have positive relationships with staff. They can identify adults who they trust and share concerns with. This has led to one child being able to alert staff to another child's actions that led to a serious safeguarding incident. This resulted in staff taking appropriate action to keep the children safe and well in the home.

Staff promote children's education. Direct work, rewards and a consistent approach to routines and boundaries have supported one child to attend school more regularly. The child living in the home has completed functional exams and identified further education options. This is in line with their career aspirations.

Children are prepared for independence well. The child living in the home is being supported to develop age-appropriate, independent life skills in line with their plan. This means that they are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge they will need when they move on from the home.

The home is spacious and communal areas are nicely decorated. However, children's bedrooms need repair and redecoration. The carpet and bed need to be replaced in one child's bedroom. This should be a priority, as these areas have not been maintained to the same standard as the rest of the home.

Staff spoken to during the inspection understand children's vulnerabilities and strengths. This is underpinned by good risk management plans for children. These plans provide staff with up-to-date information and strategies to keep children safe.

The manager and leaders recognise that the home has experienced a period of instability. This has led to more frequent incidents and two children experiencing difficult endings to their stay at the home. On several occasions, this has resulted in damage to the home and staff being physically harmed.

Staff have regularly used clear strategies to support children and de-escalate situations. When this has not been effective, they have physically intervened to keep children safe. The children's views have been sought, and direct work has been undertaken with them to avoid such situations in the future. However, the manager has not always spoken to staff promptly following incidents. This is a missed opportunity for staff to share, reflect and learn from their experiences with the manager.

When children have gone missing from care, staff have not consistently followed the missing-from-care protocol. This has been recognised by the manager, and support has been put in place to improve this. This has led to improvements in staff practice and appropriate action being taken to support one child to return home safely. Risk assessments for the child have been reviewed and updated in a timely manner.

The manager is supported by a committed and skilled responsible individual. Together, they have been developing the home and staff team since the last inspection. They have good oversight of the care of children.

Leaders and the manager understand the ongoing improvements required in the home. They have also planned for additional trauma-based training for staff. This is to further bolster staff knowledge and practice.

The manager also recognises that some of the instability and incidents in the home have been because of their poor decision-making. In particular, the matching of children has not been robust or effective. The manager has not challenged professionals to seek adequate information about one child being admitted to the home. The manager and responsible individual have plans in place to ensure this is addressed to prevent a similar situation in the future.

Staff feel supported by the manager. They have access to a range of training and regular team meetings. While the frequency of staff supervision has improved, not all staff are offered regular supervision. This remains an area of ongoing improvement.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/05/2023	Full	requires improvement to be good
24/01/2023	Full	requires improvement to be good
19/07/2021	Full	good
26/02/2020	Full	good

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 prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out— how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home; and the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. The registered person must ensure that— 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")— has spoken to the user about the measure. (Regulation 35 (1) (a)(b) (3)(b)(i)) This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	10 December 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the children's home is a nurturing and supportive environment that meets the needs of the children. This includes ensuring that all home repairs are carried out without delay. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring (including under regulations 44 and 45) to ensure continuous improvement. They should be skilled in anticipating difficulties and reviewing incidents, such as learning from disruptions and placement breakdowns. They are responsible for proactively implementing lessons learned and sustaining good practice. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 55, paragraph 10.24)

- The registered person must have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 61, paragraph 13.2)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2510199

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: St Christopher's Fellowship

Registered provider address: 1 Putney High Street, London, Wandsworth SW15 1SZ

Responsible individual: Laverne Cole

Registered manager: Paula Williams

Inspector

Nurul Kabir, Social Care Inspector

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