

2513339

Registered provider: Central Bedfordshire Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a local authority. It can provide care for up to five children with social and emotional difficulties.

The home's registered manager left the organisation on 28 September 2023. An agency manager was appointed in August 2023. They have not applied to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 April 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	inadequate
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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: 31 May 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
31/05/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
13/02/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
08/12/2021	Full	Good
08/07/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

One child was living at the home at the time of this inspection. No children have moved in or out of the home since the last inspection. The home is currently managed by an agency manager and agency staff. The manager has not applied to register with Ofsted. The provider intends to cancel the home's registration when the child living at the home moves on. Several significant management shortfalls were identified at this inspection. Despite these shortfalls, the child has made some positive progress and has a good relationship with some staff working in the home.

Leaders and managers' systems for identifying and responding to maintenance issues are not effective. Damage to the building has not been repaired and the standard of cleanliness in the home is poor. Damaged furniture has not been removed from the home; instead, this is locked in a room on the ground floor. There are no curtains in this room which means this can be seen from the front of the house. Consequently, the child living in the home is not provided with an environment which is homely. When asked what they liked about the home, the child said, 'Nothing. I hate everything about this house, it's horrible, just look at it.'

The child's care plans provide conflicting information and guidance for staff. The child does not have a local authority pathway plan, despite turning 16 six months ago. This means staff do not have important current information to help ensure that they can fully meet the child's needs.

Staff engage the child in regular meetings. Records show a good level of engagement from the child. Staff also complete regular questionnaires with the child to assess their views on the quality of care that they are receiving. However, when the child is dissatisfied, there is no follow-up work done with the child to improve these areas.

The child has made some good progress from their starting point, particularly in education. The child was subject to a deprivation of liberty order when they first moved into the home. Due to their progress, the order has now been lifted.

Leaders and managers have sustained positive relationships with external professionals. Feedback from professionals was positive. One who has been working with the child for over two years and seen the child at several placements said the child was doing so well since living in this home. An education professional said the child has 'really settled in the home and engaged in education with the support from staff'.

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

Risk assessments and care plans do not provide clear and consistent information or guidance for staff to follow. This means that staff may respond inconsistently to the child's needs and in keeping them safe.

Missing-from-home incidents for the child have reduced. However, when the child returns after being missing, staff fail to request return home interviews from the local authority. This means that there are missed opportunities for professionals to understand what the child experienced during their time away from the home and their motivation for going missing.

Staff use physical interventions as a last resort. These incidents have also reduced. Staff said they meet with the manager after incidents. However, there are no records of debriefs taking place with staff or children after an intervention. The child said they 'hate' it when staff restrain them. The manager does not analyse and evaluate incidents of physical intervention effectively. This lack of oversight means opportunities may be missed to assess staff and children's well-being after physical interventions.

Staff have a lack of understanding of the leadership structure. Those spoken to did not know who the responsible individual was. This means staff do not know the internal process of escalating concerns. However, staff were knowledgeable about which external agencies they would contact in the event of a concern being raised.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The home has not had a registered manager since September 2023. The home is run by an agency manager. The manager has failed to apply to register with Ofsted despite being in the job since August 2023. This means Ofsted has not been able to assess the suitability of the manager to run the home.

Monitoring and oversight by leaders and managers are poor. The lack of oversight means opportunities for the leadership team to make continuous improvements are missed. There is also a lack of professional curiosity when incidents are reviewed by leaders and managers. This means opportunities to learn from practice are likely to be missed.

Leaders and managers have not identified clear roles and responsibilities between the provider and the agency. When asked what the development plans were for the home, the manager said, 'I can't answer that because I don't know.' When asked about the process for children having independent return home interviews following missing-from-home incidents, the manager was not aware of the home's role in ensuring these take place.

Leaders and managers have not ensured that staff always work in line with the expectations of the home's statement of purpose. There are times when the staff follow

agency policies that differ from the provider's policies. This lack of consistency and clarity increases the risk of inconsistent practice.

The manager does not have a clear understanding of their responsibility to notify Ofsted of serious events and, on occasion, has failed to do so. This meant that Ofsted could not assess and monitor the provider's response to these incidents.

Staff undertake the agency's mandatory training. Some staff are qualified. Those who are not qualified have not yet been enrolled on a relevant level 3 diploma. Staff said they felt supported by the managers. Staff receive one-to-one supervision with the home manager or deputy. However, supervision records do not always show there has been reflection on practice, even when there are known practice issues.

The manager follows safer recruitment processes. Thorough checks are made on agency staff before they work with children, including any relevant overseas checks.

The manager has not met the requirements and the recommendation from the last inspection. Further requirements and a recommendation have been raised at this inspection.

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 ensure that— within 48 hours of the use of any measure of control, they, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(b)(i)(ii)(c)) This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	18 June 2024
Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose. (Regulation 16 (5)) This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	18 June 2024
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—	18 June 2024

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)) In particular, ensure that: incidents in the home are reviewed by the manager for effectiveness and learning to prevent reoccurrences; the standard of cleanliness and maintenance of the premises is kept under review and any actions required, including repairs to the building, are carried out without delay; children's plans and risk assessments are reviewed and updated, providing accurate guidance for staff caring for children; staff are aware of the management structure and who to contact internally if they need to escalate a concern.	
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(e))	18 June 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that no more than half the staff on duty at the home at any one time, by day or night, are from an external agency. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.17)
- The registered person should ensure that, when a child returns to the home after being missing or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)
- The registered person should 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)

- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs and should understand the key role they play in the training and development of staff in the home. In particular, ensure that staff who have not yet enrolled on the relevant diploma do so. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)
- The registered person should ensure that children are able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted on. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)

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: 2513339

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Central Bedfordshire Council

Registered provider address: Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford SG17 5TQ

Responsible individual: Hayley Griffin

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Anver Rose, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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