

2513339

Registered provider: Central Bedfordshire Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home provides care and accommodation for up to five children who present with challenging and complex behaviour. The manager was registered with Ofsted in January 2019.

Inspection dates: 16 May 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	inadequate
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	inadequate
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
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There are serious failures that mean children and young people are not protected or safeguarded and the care and experiences of children and young people are poor.

Date of last inspection: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date

Inspection type

Inspection judgement

First inspection

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Serious concerns about children's welfare following high-level behavioural incidents coupled with a decline in the children's living environment have resulted in a judgement of inadequate. The number and seriousness of the incidents are detrimental to children's well-being and place them at risk of harm.

Some children lived at the home prior to the change of provider in 2019 and have good relationships with the staff. Children enjoy spending time with the staff. Children have built resilience and understand other children's personal challenges. However, constant behavioural incidents have taken up much of the staff's time and availability.

Three of the children had made good progress in all areas of their lives until recently, when a fourth child's behaviour meant constant daily challenges for the staff. Because the staff are continually managing behavioural incidents, their time and capacity to provide good-quality care for the other children have reduced.

Some children make progress in their education attendance and achievement. Children who were previously not in school now attend daily, are undertaking exams and enjoy being at a supportive school. However, one child's offer of an education provision was withdrawn through no fault of the manager, staff or child. The child's emotional well-being has significantly deteriorated as a result. His commitment and engagement to his current education package are lacking. Intermittent attendance and the subsequent lack of routine have contributed to continual behavioural incidents throughout each day.

The staff work tirelessly to ensure that when damage occurs to the environment it is rectified swiftly. The staff regularly replace the kettle, microwave and toaster. They replenish food in the fridge and repair damage to the home. Despite this, soft furnishings, pictures, photographs, rugs and other items that make the home welcoming are damaged too regularly to keep replacing. The children's access to the fridge is restricted via a locked door due to one child emptying the contents daily. Children live in an environment that is unwelcoming.

Some children's individual direct work sessions lack enough discussion to address concerns. Records detail a reflection of incidents but fail to demonstrate engagement with the child to gain their view.

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

Children experience daily disruption and an unpredictable atmosphere. They live in an environment of daily verbal abuse and damage to the home. Threats of physical harm to staff are commonplace. Staff, in the main, challenge inappropriate behaviour without success.

The manager informs all relevant external agencies and the placing authority of all safeguarding concerns. These concerns include incidents that take place when the children are in the community. However, the staff fail to provide a consistent approach to managing the children's challenging behaviour. The staff's response to drug and alcohol misuse is not consistently adequate and fails to provide sufficient safeguards.

Behaviour management plans fail to identify children's individual behavioural concerns or guide staff on how to manage the behaviours effectively. The children receive inconsistent and ineffective responses. De-escalation techniques do not work, and children often ignore staff requests. On occasions, the staff lack control. Some children go out in the community, unsupervised by staff, when in a distressed emotional state. Their behaviour has, at times, a detrimental effect on the local community and places children and the public at significant risk of harm.

Some children had extremely late coming-in times, in agreement with the police and placing authority. Because of this, the children have not been reported as missing despite known safeguarding risks. Sometimes, the staff keep in contact with children by telephone. Although coming-in times have changed slightly, some children continue to be out in the community until very late into the evening. On occasions, when out in the community, children have run away from staff and staff have not looked for them or tried to locate them. Children's welfare is not sufficiently protected.

The home's location risk assessment does not include enough information about local places and people of concern in the community. Therefore, the staff may be unaware of some of the information or recurring themes and the action needed to reduce the risks to children and staff.

There are few physical interventions. Staff occasionally apply consequences in response to negative behaviour. However, these consequences are often based on children having no lifts. This is a concern given that most of the children require lifts to see their families, and such consequences therefore potentially restrict contact.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The manager of the home has substantial experience and the necessary qualifications to manage the home. She was registered in January 2019.

The instability of the home and recent challenges have reduced the manager's capacity to undertake some of the management tasks. This has led to ineffective management oversight and monitoring. Paperwork is not up to date and the aims set out in the statement of purpose are not fully realised.

External monitoring of the home identifies areas for improvement. However, due to the current situation, the manager has not implemented all the recommendations. The independent person's reports are sent to Ofsted late, which restricts Ofsted's ability to have a current view of the home.

The staff team provides stability and continuity of care. The staff genuinely care for the children. Staff are flexible in providing cover for one another. Despite the recent challenges, they remain focused and resilient. However, none of the staff have undertaken specific training to meet the needs of the children who currently live at the home.

The manager has raised the majority of the behavioural concerns with senior managers in the organisation and the relevant social worker. Although a plan is in place to support the staff and the child who has very complex needs, it is of concern that the current situation is affecting all of the children's well-being.

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, 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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child; and enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b)(2)(c)(i)(ii))	28/06/2019
The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans; help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible. (Regulation 8 (1)(2)(a)(i)(viii))	28/06/2019
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on—	28/06/2019

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— 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; de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c)(2)(a)(ix)(xi))	
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; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; and 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. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(v)(b))*	07/06/2019
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 the premises used for the purposes of the home are located so that children are effectively safeguarded. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(c))	28/06/2019

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— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(c)(f))	28/06/2019
No measure of control or discipline which is excessive, unreasonable or contrary to paragraph (2) may be used in relation to any child. The following measures may not be used to discipline any child— any restriction, other than one imposed by a court or in accordance with regulation 22 (contact and access to communications), on— a child's contact with parents, relatives or friends. (Regulation 19 (1)(2)(c)(i))	28/06/2019
The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person's report to— HMCI. (Regulation 44 (7)(a)) In particular, send the independent person's report to Ofsted without delay.	28/06/2019

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford,
Central Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ

Responsible individual: Kenneth Harvey

Registered manager: Amy Clark

Inspectors

Natalie Burton, social care inspector

Kristen Judd, regulatory inspection manager

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