

2513339

Registered provider: Central Bedfordshire Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A local authority runs this home. The home provides care for up to five children, aged between 12 and 18, who have social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in July 2020.

Inspection dates: 31 May and 1 June 2023

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: 13 February 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
13/02/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
08/12/2021	Full	Good
08/07/2019	Full	Good
16/05/2019	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

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

Five children have lived at the home since the last inspection. Three children lived at the home for a considerable time. One child lived at the home for one day. A decision by senior managers to move a fifth child to the home led to significant disruption to the four children already living at the home. This resulted in abrupt endings to the four children's time at the home. Following significant damage to the home, all the children had to move out. Once the damage was repaired, only the fifth child has been moved back in.

Senior leaders' decision to move one child into the home failed to consider the impact on children who were already living there. Consequently, children have experienced distress because of damage to the home and the fact that they had to move out quickly. One child moved to emergency foster care, three children were moved to a hotel and then moved between holiday accommodation. Another child was moved into a short-break children's home operated by the local authority. At the time of this inspection, two children were still living in holiday accommodation pending confirmation of a move to foster care. Despite staff doing their best to support the children in temporary accommodation, planned endings at the home could not be achieved.

Children's care plans are either missing or incomplete. One child did not have a complete care plan despite having lived at the home for two months. Local authority plans on children's files refer to where children have lived previously. Consequently, staff do not have important current information to ensure that they can fully meet children's needs.

There is limited evidence to demonstrate the progress that children have made. It is unclear what opportunities staff have provided to help children develop and become independent. It is unclear what children's abilities are and what additional support is needed to help them develop further.

Records lack sufficient detail to evidence the activities that children have experienced. Despite children living in holiday accommodation, it is unclear if they have enjoyed these new experiences and had fun. Memory books are incomplete and have not been provided to children who have left the home. This does not give children the opportunity to look back on their memories of the home.

Damage caused to the home has been repaired. However, photos and homely furnishings that were removed when a child was distressed have not been replaced. This is despite the child feeling more settled. This fails to provide an environment in which the child can feel a sense of belonging.

Despite the changes to where children are living, attendance at school has remained a priority. The four children who moved out have continued to attend their identified education provision and attendance is good. This has meant stability in education for those children. The manager is working closely with external professionals to identify a suitable school placement for the child who is currently living at the home.

Staff are helping the child who is living at the home to adjust to healthy routines. A weekly planner has been introduced to help the child to plan their days. The child was enthusiastic to start using this and was proud to show inspectors the planner. Staff are helping the child to feel positive and to make healthy choices.

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

The quality of record-keeping is not consistently good. Many records lack sufficient detail. Risk assessments and behaviour plans contain several gaps and do not consistently provide clear guidance for staff to follow. One child's specific behaviours and the impact of these on others have not been assessed. The child has experienced long durations of distress which have not been included in their assessments. The lack of detail means that staff may respond inconsistently.

Two children left the home together without permission on one occasion. One child has left the home on three occasions, despite agreed restrictions for the child. The procedures for staff to follow are either absent or incomplete. Staff request return home interviews, but fail to challenge the placing local authority when these meetings do not occur. The lack of professional curiosity means that staff do not know what children experienced during their time away from the home.

Staff use consequences and rewards to encourage children to make positive choices. However, staff do not consistently record these approaches. The manager does not evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies. The lack of comprehensive records and professional curiosity means that the staff's decisions are not challenged and progress that the children make is not captured.

Staff use physical interventions as a last resort. There have been five incidents of restraint since the last inspection. These were in respect of one child. However, the duration of holds is not clearly recorded. The manager does not meet with staff after an intervention. It is unclear when the manager evaluates the effectiveness of the restraint. On two occasions, after a child was restrained, they told staff that their wrists had been hurt. Staff failed to seek medical advice about the child's concerns. Managers did not act in respect of this until it was identified at the inspection.

The language staff use to describe children and incidents is often child blaming and institutionalised. Words used by staff to describe children include them being 'sulky'.

Known concerns about staff's practice are managed without delay. The manager works with external professionals and the local authority designated officer to

explore staff practice. This has resulted in four investigations, three of which were ongoing at the time of inspection.

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

The registered manager is qualified and experienced to manage the home. An experienced responsible individual supports the manager.

Managerial monitoring and oversight need improvement. The lack of managerial oversight reduces the opportunity for the leadership team to make continuous improvements efficiently. Leaders and managers lack professional curiosity and view incidents in isolation. This means that learning from practice does not consider all relevant information.

There have been changes to the staff team. Agency staff have joined the team to provide additional support to children. However, the rota does not evidence staff's activity. This means that any concerns about staff practice could not be fully explored. Staff spoken with during the inspection were not in agreement with decisions made by senior managers to change children's living arrangements. This was fed back to the responsible individual, who plans to provide additional support to all staff.

The manager has not reviewed the home's statement of purpose to reflect the recent changes. While this has minimal impact on children, it means that Ofsted is unable to monitor care practice as described in the statement of purpose.

Staff undertake the organisation's mandatory training. Staff are either qualified to, or working towards, a relevant level 3 diploma within timescales. However, the manager has not equipped staff with the training that they need to enable them to help children when they experience distress caused from historical trauma.

Senior managers have held reflective reviews on the recent moves of children. They are keen to develop better care planning and resources in the local area.

The manager follows safer recruitment processes. Thorough checks are made on permanent and agency staff before they work with children. All staff have an induction. This helps them to understand the organisation's values, policies and procedures.

Staff receive regular supervision which is to a good standard. Supervisors are experienced in helping staff reflect. Supervision records evidence a good level of engagement during these meetings. Managers also use this opportunity to provide informal learning opportunities. Staff are helped to develop and talk about any concerns they have.

The manager has met two of the requirements and one recommendation from the last inspection. Two requirements in respect of leadership and management and

help and protection are restated. One recommendation in respect of the home's environment has been met. However, a further recommendation to provide a more homely environment is raised.

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; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; 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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vi)) In particular, ensure that staff understand their roles in relation to children leaving the home without permission and that return home interviews should be arranged. If children are harmed during a restraint, staff must seek medical advice for the child and managers should thoroughly review incidents with staff and reflect on them. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	30 June 2023
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—	30 June 2023

helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and

promotes their welfare.

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

ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate;

use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.
(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(h))

In particular, ensure that:

there is effective oversight and monitoring of all incidents involving children;

children's behaviour assessments, risk assessments and missing-from-home protocols are clear, give staff guidance and contain up-to-date information;

children's care plans are up to date and complete;

children's physical intervention records are clear and contain relevant information and are evaluated by a manager within agreed timescales;

staff are offered a debrief after any physical intervention used;

consequences and rewards used to help children are evaluated by the manager within the agreed timescales;

when incidents are reviewed, if there is improvement needed regarding staff's recording or language, this is appropriately addressed;

staff's concerns about children's experiences are considered by senior leaders;

the rota reflects where and when permanent and agency staff work;

staff are trained to meet the specific needs of children.

This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.

The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)) In particular: consider whether staff have the knowledge and skills to meet all the children's needs; and ensure that children can say goodbye to each other and staff when they move on and receive memory books to reflect their time living at the home.	7 July 2023
The enjoyment and achievement standard is that children take part in and benefit from a variety of activities that meet their needs and develop and reflect their creative, cultural, intellectual, physical and social interests and skills. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff help each child to— participate in activities that the child enjoys and which meet and expand the child's interests and preferences. (Regulation 9 (1) (2)(a)(ii)) In particular, record the activities that children have experienced and the progress that children have made since living at the home.	7 July 2023
The registered person must— keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it;	30 June 2023

notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision.
(Regulation 16 (3)(a)(b))

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the children's home is a nurturing and supportive environment that meet the needs of children. Children's homes will, in most cases, be homely environments. Specifically, the registered person should ensure that the home feels welcoming with soft furnishings and the child's personal belongings around them. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that records of notifiable events include all relevant information of the incident and a description of the action taken and the outcome of any resulting investigation. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.14)

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

Responsible individual: Joy Piper

Registered manager: James Hardy

Inspectors

Mandy Start, Social Care Inspector
Leah Stannard, Social Care Inspector

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