

2537801

Registered provider: Exceptional Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately run children's home is registered to provide care for up to three children who may have emotional and social difficulties. At the time of the inspection, there were two children living in the home.

There is no registered manager in post. A new manager is in post but has not yet applied to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 November 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **requires improvement to be good**

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

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

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: 10 August 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection: This home was judged inadequate at the full inspection on 10, 11 and 18 August 2022. Following the inspection, two compliance notices were issued under regulation 12, the protection of children standard, and regulation 13, the leadership and management standard.

A monitoring visit was carried out on 30 September 2022. The provider had taken sufficient action to meet the compliance notices. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/08/2022	Full	Inadequate
23/06/2021	Full	Good
18/02/2020	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

Since the monitoring visit, no children have moved in or out of the home. A new manager has been recruited. He has not yet applied to Ofsted to be registered.

At the time of the inspection, two children lived at the home. They both spent time talking to the inspectors. Children enjoyed sharing their views about the care that they receive and their relationships with staff. Both children identified improvements that could be made to help and support them with their education and behaviour. However, children said that they did not feel that they were treated equally, and they were unhappy about the number of times that there had been changes to the staff who are looking after them.

Education planning for children has not been carefully considered. When education settings are not meeting children's specific educational needs, there is a lack of challenge by the provider. When children are not engaging in their education or are absent from school on a temporary basis, plans in place are poor. Children expressed their anxieties about their current education provisions. Further work is required to ensure that children are supported to achieve their full educational potential and overcome any barriers to learning.

Placement plans for children are out of date. Plans have not been updated to reflect their current circumstances. Children's views are recorded in the plans with their agreed goals. However, they have not been achieved or reviewed by staff. This means that plans are not meaningful and they do not demonstrate that children are listened to.

Children's health is promoted, and children attend appointments with medical professionals.

When children spend time with people who are important to them, including friends and family, risk assessments are not robust. This includes when there are identified concerns. When staff transport children to spend time with friends and family, they do not check the premises of where children are staying, even when this includes overnight stays. This leaves children vulnerable.

The home's statement of purpose states that the psychologist 'provides clinical consultation to the children's residential homes' and 'one-to-one time is afforded to the young people when indicated, but in the main, staff are trained and supported to work with the young people in a therapeutic way'. Inspectors saw no evidence of this in children's health plans. Children, staff and the manager were not familiar with the psychologist and could not recall their name.

The home itself is safe and spacious, but improvements are needed. Staff reported that the way the home is set up makes it difficult to manage and support all children. The provider is aware of the difficulties that are experienced at the home and is considering what changes can be made to the environment.

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

Children are not yet receiving good enough care and protection. Measures are not consistently applied to reduce risks. Children's risks are not reducing.

Individual risk assessments are not kept up to date as incidents occur that do not reflect current behaviours or risks. Staff demonstrate insight into the risks for children. For example, they know what to do when children go missing from their home. However, staff are not consistent in their approach when children's behaviours escalate.

Furthermore, when children are struggling with their emotional health, there is not a clear plan in place to monitor them afterwards. Serious incidents are not consistently evaluated. Although staff report that this takes place, there is no recording of the checks or rational to explain decision-making about not seeking follow-up medical advice.

Although staff use incentives and consequences to support children with their behaviour, there is not a consistent approach or rational for how consequences are agreed. Children said that consequences are unfair. This is not an equitable and transparent process. Additionally, when children receive a consequence, it is not always recorded or fully explained to them. Consequences are not time-limited or restorative. This does not ensure that children understand the decision-making process and they are not supported to reflect on and address their behaviour.

Children are aware of the complaints procedure and said that they know how to complain.

Safer recruitment processes are consistently followed. Records demonstrate that appropriate checks have been conducted prior to staff starting in the home. This does not ensure that only suitable people work with children.

A range of health and safety checks are completed to assess whether there are any hazards that could pose risks to children. Children take part in regular fire drills to ensure that they know how to safely evacuate the home in case of such an emergency. However, new staff working in the home do not have a fire drill as part of their induction.

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

Management arrangements at the home have not always been effective. There has not been a registered manager since December 2021. Since then, there has been a lack of consistent management cover. This has created instability for children and staff.

The new manager has only recently started working for the provider. He is an experienced manager. However, at the time of the inspection, he had not yet read key documents, including children's risk assessments and placement plans, and was unclear of the legal status for a child's placement.

Staff members report that they feel happy and supported. They feel that they work in a safe, supportive working atmosphere. However, staff still do not consistently follow the boundaries in place. This includes challenging children when they use inappropriate language. When relationships between children have been strained, staff have not been proactive in addressing this and supporting all children individually. This means that children's interactions with each other continued to be negative.

Staff have access to training and support. Supervision has improved, and all staff are attending regular team meetings.

Leaders and managers have not ensured that there is a consistent and robust approach in place to maintain records with accurate and up-to-date information. Records are not always evaluated or signed off by management and can be confusing and contradictory. The language used by staff in some records is not child friendly or accurate, and can blame children for their behaviours.

Most staff hold the required level 3 diploma qualification. A small number are currently working to achieve this or are planned to be enrolled on a training programme. Plans are in place to ensure that staff complete this qualification within the required timescales.

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 children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who develop positive relationships with them; engage with them; and take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child's best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare; help each child to express views, wishes and feelings; help each child to understand how the child's views, wishes and feelings have been taken into account and give the child reasons for decisions in relation to the child; regularly consult children, and seek their feedback, about the quality of the home's care; help each child to prepare for any review of the child's relevant plans and to make the child's views, wishes and feelings known for the purposes of that review; and make each child aware of and, if necessary, remind them of each of the matters in sub-paragraph (d)(i) to (iii); ensure that each child is enabled to provide feedback to, and raise issues with, a relevant person about the support and services that the child receives. (Regulation 7 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(b)(i)) The registered person must ensure that children have the opportunity to express their views and wishes and that these are responded to.	21 December 2022

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; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; 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; 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)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)) The refers specifically to ensuring that risk management plans contain all the relevant information for children and that staff follow the correct procedures when a safeguarding issue arises.	21 December 2022
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;	21 December 2022

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; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; and feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(f)(g)(i)(ii)(h)) This is in relation to ensuring that there are systems in place to monitor the quality of care and the impact this has on children's progress.	
The care planning standard is that children receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that arrangements are in place to manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and that each child's relevant plans are followed; that staff help each child to access and contribute to the records kept by the registered person in relation to the child. (Regulation 14 (1)(a) (2)(b)(ii)(c)(f)) This is in relation to ensuring that children's plans are up to date and that staff follow them.	21 December 2022
The registered person must keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and 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)) This is specifically in relation to ensuring that the statement of purpose is sent to Ofsted when updated.	21 December 2022
The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children's home if there is no registered manager in respect of the home; and the registered provider is an organisation or a partnership; does not satisfy regulation 28; or is not, or does not intend to be, in day-to-day charge of the home.	21 December 2022

(Regulation 27 (1)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(iii))

This refers specifically to ensuring that the home has a manager.

Recommendations

- The registered person must ensure that when children are excluded from education, they work closely with the placing authority to ensure that children can return to education. In the interim, children should be supported in a structured way. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.15)
- The registered person should ensure that children's health needs are met. Staff should work to ensure that children's physical, mental and emotional health needs are met in line with the home's statement of purpose. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 33, paragraph 7.3)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policy on record-keeping. Records should be objective and should not stigmatise children. Information should be recorded in a way that will be helpful to children. ('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: 2537801

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Exceptional Care Limited

Registered provider address: Malthouse Business Centre, Southport Road,
Ormskirk L39 1QR

Responsible individual: Susan Rolfe

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Jessica Higginson, Social Care Inspector
Rachael Crook, Social Care Inspector

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