

2548334

Registered provider: Oak House Children's Home Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned home provides care for up to three boys. The provider's statement of purpose states that it aims to provide residential care with a therapeutic emphasis and multi-agency involvement. The provider has another children's home in the area and an independent school.

The home was registered with Ofsted in 2019. The home has not had a registered manager since May 2021. The current manager has applied to register with Ofsted.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 December 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

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

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 5 March 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/03/2020	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children develop trusting relationships with staff. They make good progress in all aspects of their lives and thrive from their positive experiences. Children are successfully encouraged to develop age-appropriate independence skills. They learn to shop and cook for themselves, do their own laundry and clean their own bedrooms. Children are also incentivised to help clean the home's communal areas or weed the garden.

Staff are resourceful in overcoming any barriers to children's education. Staff successfully challenge providers and advocate for children. This helps to ensure that children have access to formal education. To encourage continued learning, while waiting for a school place, staff and children visit museums and libraries together. Staff support children with their homework. Children take their examinations and their school attendance is 100%.

Staff support children in their classrooms which helps to reduce their anxiety. One child has re-engaged with school after a five-year absence. Some children enhance their learning and development further by undertaking voluntary work at a local farm and work experience as a youth club mentor.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some of the children's community activities have been restricted. Despite this, staff prioritise children's emotional and physical health. They have employed a personal fitness trainer, and children enjoy bicycle rides around the local park. Children socialise with their peers and staff, have movie nights, play backgammon, have chess competitions and takeaway nights.

With COVID-19 restrictions easing, children enjoyed the home's annual summer holiday, monthly meals out and a trip to the Black History Museum. Children also continued with their interests and hobbies such as swimming and fitness training.

Staff create a nurturing and welcoming home environment for the children alongside a 'firm but fair' home ethos. A social worker said, 'The staff have implemented consistent and firm boundaries with very clear rules and kept [name of child] grounded.' Children spoken to during the inspection, reported that they love the home and the staff.

The home is arranged to meet the needs of all of the children. The kitchen and lounge offer suitable communal spaces for the children. Children help choose their bedroom decorations and personalise their space with family photographs and posters. However, one child's bedroom window is awaiting a new window blind to be fitted. The temporary window covering diminishes the homely environment.

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

Children benefit from the support of an in-house psychotherapist who offers them weekly individual therapeutic support and advice. This helps children to learn and develop coping strategies. The psychotherapist shares any concerns about the children and provides guidance to the staff team. As a result, staff understand the children's risks and their complex needs very well.

The hard-working staff provide significant support and guidance to the children to help keep them safe. Children receive high levels of supervision in the community and in the home when appropriate. Children spoken to by the inspector, confirmed that they feel safe living in the home. One parent wrote to the staff, 'I hope that this (letter) puts smiles on all of your faces knowing that all of your hard work really does pay off.'

Children participate in the home's 'trust building' programme. Children and their key workers work together in a step-by-step plan which enables children to access the community with staff supervision levels gradually reducing. Staff monitor children's mobile phone and internet usage. This, combined with key-work sessions, increases children's safety, and helps to reduce incidents of missing from home or involvement in criminal activity.

Staff rarely use restraint or sanctions to manage children's complex behaviours. Children are successfully encouraged to engage in mediation when needed, or they write letters of apology. Children also look forward to a professional weekly head and shoulder massage. The manager described this as a 'calm space' for them and children say that it is 'relaxing'.

Children engage with the home's 'raise the marks' programme. This encourages children to identify their individual wishes and aspirations. Staff support children to reach their targets. Examples include learning to ride a bike or eating a new fruit or vegetable every month.

Staff make sure that children spend time with their important friends and families, including those who live a long distance away. One parent said, 'The home is really helpful in facilitating this. They are very, very supportive and also meet me at the station.'

Children regularly participate in the home's fire drills. All of the children have a personal emergency evacuation plan. This helps to ensure that they will be safe should an emergency occur. However, staff spoken with were unclear of the frequency of night-time fire drills.

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

The home is managed effectively. Since the last inspection, the registered manager has resigned and a new manager has been appointed. The new manager has

applied to register with Ofsted. He has a wealth of experience of working with vulnerable children and their families. He is supported by a deputy manager and a fully staffed, stable and experienced team of staff. A social worker said, 'The home is well organised and managed.'

The home's in-house counsellor joins the regular staff meetings. She provides staff with the opportunity to reflect on and discuss children's care plans and any developing needs or risks. Staff communication with professionals and other agencies is comprehensive and consistent. This helps to ensure that children receive the specialist support that they may need. A member of staff said, 'I am proud to be a part of this great team.'

All staff have a suitable residential children's home qualification. Staff undertake a comprehensive range of training. This includes specialist training to meet the specific needs of the children in their care. However, the staff training matrix is not up to date, and some staff have not received formal specific-needs training in a timely manner. The manager reported that the missing training is scheduled for the new year.

Leaders and manager's oversight of administration and documents requires improvement. Ofsted has not received the home's latest statement of purpose as required. The manager's quality of care review report does not include the feedback and opinions of staff and professionals as required. This is a missed opportunity to further develop the service.

The inspector identified that one child's behaviour and risk management plan was incorrectly dated. Also, one child's care plan was not reviewed according to the home's own review date expectation.

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 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 work as a team where appropriate; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(c)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that all staff receive training to meet the particular needs of the children living in the home and ensure that the staff training matrix is kept up to date.	31 January 2022
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c))	31 January 2022

In particular, the registered person must ensure that children's care plans are kept up to date and children's documents are correctly dated.	
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months. In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. After completing a quality of care review, the registered person must produce a written report about the quality of care review and the actions which the registered person intends to take as a result of the quality of care review ("the quality of care review report"). The registered person must— supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed; and make a copy of the quality of care review report available on request to a placing authority, if the placing authority is not the parent of a child accommodated in the home. The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c) (3) (4)(a)(b) (5))	31 March 2022
The registered person must— keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and	31 January 2022

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))	
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that they comply with the relevant health and safety legislation and clarify and agree on the frequency of the home's night-time fire drills. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that children are provided with suitable furniture and fittings in their bedrooms. In particular, the registered person should fit a child's bedroom window blind without delay. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.19)

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: 2548334

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Oak House Children's Home Ltd

Registered provider address: c/o ABC Care Solutions, 249 Cranbrook Road, Ilford, Essex IG1 4TG

Responsible individual: Saheena Saeed

Manager: John Henry application in progress

Inspector

Victoria Jones, Social Care Inspector

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