

2548334

Registered provider: Oak House Children's Home Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home cares for three boys with emotional and social difficulties.

The registered manager post is vacant.

At the time of the inspection, there were three children living at the home.

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 November 2022

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: 7 December 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/12/2021	Full	Good
05/03/2020	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

Since the last inspection, the home has experienced a number of staff changes, including the sudden resignation of the home's therapist. These changes have undermined the continuity of care and emotional support provided to children. Prior to the therapist leaving, the children received weekly therapeutic support, and this was helping them to deal with past trauma and difficult emotions. One child was using art to express their feelings in a safe and supported environment. A child said, 'I now have better control of my temper.' Staff have also lost the expert support and guidance that were provided by the therapist.

The use of CCTV inside the home is compromising children's privacy. A child said that they feel constantly watched in the home. The manager does not keep the use of CCTV under review to ensure that it is only used to safeguard children and is necessary. Furthermore, staff sleeping arrangements restrict the children's use of the living room because staff use this room to sleep in at night.

Children are registered with local healthcare professionals, and they attend routine appointments. However, leaders and managers do not ensure that healthcare reports are obtained and stored in the children's files. These reports provide helpful information about the children's health needs, which should inform the home's placement plans. Some shortfalls were found in the administration of children's medication. Staff are not proactively encouraging and supporting children to take medication as prescribed by their doctor.

Children are attending education and are making progress from their starting points. A school mentor said, 'Staff will support [name of child] to complete their homework, and they attend all school meetings.'

Children are learning how to become independent, and staff support and encourage them to develop important life skills, such as cooking, attending to their laundry and shopping. A child said, 'I have excelled in cooking with staff supervision.' Children are supported to keep in touch with people who are important to them, which increases their sense of belonging.

Children are praised and rewarded for their achievements and positive behaviour. They are taken out to do activities, for example an overnight trip to a theme park, which they thoroughly enjoyed.

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

Children living at this home are safe, and they feel safe. Trusting relationships between staff and children increase children's safety. However, some areas of safeguarding practice require improvement.

Impact risk assessments do not provide sufficient detail or analysis of how risks will be managed. Risk levels are inaccurately recorded, and there is no assessment of staff's skills and ability to mitigate risk. Additionally, the local area assessment is not considered in these assessments. Children's risk assessments do not identify all known or potential risks. They are not kept up to date or reflect the positive progress that children make.

When children go missing from home, which is rare, staff follow the correct procedures and keep all relevant agencies informed. However, when return home interviews are not undertaken, the manager and staff do not actively chase this up with the child's placing authority. This is a missed opportunity to gather information about the reasons why children go missing from the home.

Staff do not have meaningful discussions with children about risk and keeping themselves safe when concerns arise. For example, when staff found images of a knife on a child's phone, there was no record of them discussing this with the child.

Recruitment practice is robust. This helps to ensure that only suitable people work in the home. Health and safety checks in the home are routinely carried out to ensure that the home is a safe place for children to live. However, fire drills are not swiftly undertaken when new children move into the home to ensure that they understand the home's emergency evacuation procedures.

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

The registered manager resigned in May 2021. A new manager was quickly appointed, and they applied to register with Ofsted. In February 2022, they left and withdrew their application to register. The current manager was appointed in July 2022, and his application to register is progressing. He has experience of children's residential care. The provider did not keep Ofsted informed of all management changes as required.

The staff team is largely inexperienced and does not have the relevant children's residential care qualification. There is a plan to enrol unqualified staff in the relevant course. Staff benefit from an in-depth induction, and they demonstrate a willingness to learn and develop. Undoubtedly, they have children's welfare and best interest at the centre of their practice. The home is sufficiently staffed.

Staff training is inconsistent, and the staff training matrix is not kept up to date. There was evidence of staff receiving some online training. However, it is unclear if

new staff have completed their mandatory training. Not all staff receive regular supervision from the manager. Opportunities for the manager to provide support and guidance and review staff practice are being missed.

The home is not maintained to a high standard, and some repairs identified at the last inspection remain outstanding. Poor home maintenance is detracting from a homely feeling.

The home's statement of purpose is out of date. It does not include the changes in staff or detail staff's qualifications and experience. The children's guide is not written in a child-friendly way and is also out of date. On several occasions, staff referred to the children as 'YP's', which is impersonal and stigmatising.

The home is not delivering the outcomes that are set out in its statement of purpose. In the absence of a therapist, children are not receiving therapeutic care and support. Leaders and managers do not have in place effective monitoring systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. Three requirements raised at the last inspection have been repeated.

The manager and staff have a good understanding of the children's progress, in particular their independent skills, which the children and staff are proud of. Professionals and parents are kept updated on the children's progress, and they praise the continued progress that children are making, for example noticeable improvements in their education.

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
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (a)) This relates to ensuring that all relevant documents are obtained from the local authority and return home interviews are robustly chased up.	31 January 2023
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; and use this understanding to deliver care that meets. 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. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)) This relates to ensuring that all areas of the home are maintained to a high standard and repairs are carried out swiftly.	31 January 2023
The health and well-being standard is that— the health and well-being needs of children are met; children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being; and	31 January 2023

children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered manager to ensure— that staff help each child to— achieve the health and well-being outcomes that are recorded in the child’s relevant plans. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)) This relates to ensuring that children are encouraged and supported to take their medication as prescribed.	
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; and understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)) This relates to ensuring that all risks are thoroughly assessed and recorded and that staff have the knowledge and skills to mitigate risk.	31 January 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— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—	31 January 2023

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; and ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)) This relates to ensuring that all staff receive training to meet the particular needs of the children living in the home and that the training matrix is kept up to date. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. 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 (1) (3)(a)(b)) This relates to ensuring that the home's statement of purpose details all staff's qualifications and experience. When updated, a copy must be sent to Ofsted within the required timescale. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	31 January 2023
The registered manager must ensure that— children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises— is necessary and proportionate; and is kept under review and, if necessary, revised. (Regulation 21 (b)(c)(ii)(iii).	31 January 2023

This relates to ensuring that the use of CCTV in the home is proportionate and necessary and constantly reviewed.	
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b))	31 January 2023
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)) This relates to ensuring that all relevant documents are obtained from the placing authorities and that children's documents are correctly dated and consistently signed. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	31 January 2023
The registered person must give notice in writing to HMCI, as soon as it is reasonably practicable to do so, if any of the following events takes place or are expected by the registered person to take place— a person other than the registered person carries on or manages the children's home. (Regulation 49 (a))	31 January 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that they carry out a fire drill when new children move into the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of using language that shows care when referring to children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person should ensure that the children's guide is updated to reflect the current staff team and is written in a child-friendly way. ('Guide to the

Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph 4.23)

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: A B C Care Solutions, 249 Cranbrook Road, Ilford IG1 4TG

Responsible individual: Saheena Saeed

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Zara Salim, Social Care Inspector

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