

2561501

Registered provider: Smartcare Services

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home registered with Ofsted in April 2020 and is privately owned. It provides care for up to four children who experience social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in May 2021.

At the time of this inspection, three children were living in the home. The inspector spoke with two of the children.

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 June 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 11 July 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/07/2023	Full	Good
20/04/2022	Full	Good
18/05/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children make good progress living in the home. Staff know the children well. Children say that staff listen to them and that they like living in the home. If children want to celebrate special occasions, staff plan events with them and children are made to feel special. For example, a recent birthday celebration included decorating the house with balloons and lights, having a barbecue and inviting people who are important to the child to join in with the celebrations.

Staff support children to engage in education. Education is something that the home promotes, and staff are proud of children's achievements. Children aspire to achieve their individual goals and are studying the relevant courses to help them to achieve their aspirations.

Children benefit from focused discussions and key-work sessions with staff. These discussions help to build children's confidence, resilience and self-esteem. Staff support children to discuss important topics, such as drug awareness, exploitation and their well-being.

Children have contact with family and friends, and this is encouraged if it is deemed safe to do so. Staff work with parents to promote continuity in the children's lives.

Children are in good health and their health needs are met. Medication is managed and reviewed by the registered manager. Through the reviewing and monitoring of medication, some gaps were identified, and the system has been improved.

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

Children say that they feel safe. Physical intervention has not been used for children living in the home. Staff understand children's individual needs and how to manage their behaviour well.

Missing-from-care episodes are reducing. If children go missing from home, leaders and managers are proactive. They advocate for children's safety, and the registered manager challenges the wider network to ensure that children are safe.

Staff respond when children return after being missing from the home. Debriefs and key-work sessions take place. Children said that staff have supported them in the community by using 'safe words'. Staff also make repeated attempts to reach children when they are away from the home.

Staff revise risk assessments for children to reflect changing circumstances. Leaders, managers and staff are aware of children's individual risks. These risks are shared with families and the professional network to support children to access relevant services,

such as drug and alcohol services, health and therapeutic services. Staff also talk about each child's needs and risks during team meetings and supervision sessions. This ensures that there is robust oversight of safeguarding practice in the home.

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

Leadership and management of the home are going through some changes. The current registered manager has been promoted in the company. A new manager has been recruited, who is working in the home but has not yet started managing the staff. These changes have led to discord among the staff team. The changeover has been poorly planned, which is creating instability in the home.

The staff team primarily consists of non-permanent staff from an agency. Although the agency workers are consistent and know the children well, there is a lack of commitment, which creates instability. Leaders and managers acknowledge that this approach to staffing and recruitment needs to change to provide more stability for children.

Leaders and managers do not undertake or record supervision, induction or probation effectively. There are gaps in mandatory training as set out in the home's statement of purpose.

Leaders and managers do not consistently send information to Ofsted as required. This includes sending the updated statement of purpose and submitting the quality of care review within timescales. This compromises the regulator's external oversight of the home.

Leaders and managers ensure that there is good maintenance of the home. The home meets the children's needs and feels like a family home.

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 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. Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose. (Regulation 16 (1) (3)(a)(b) (5)) In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that the statement of purpose is kept up to date and includes an accurate description of staff training. This requirement is restated.	5 August 2024
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. 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. (Regulation 45 (1) (4)(a)(b))	5 August 2024

In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that the quality of care reviews are carried out within the necessary timescales and the reports are sent to Ofsted. This requirement is restated.	
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; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (2)(a)(c)(h)) In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that they lead the home and provide staff with training in line with the home’s statement of purpose.	5 August 2024
The registered person must— ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction; ensure that each permanent appointment of an employee is subject to the satisfactory completion of a period of probation; and provide each employee with a job description outlining the employee’s responsibilities. The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (a)(b)(c) (4)(a)(b)(c))	5 August 2024

In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that staff receive regular supervision, probation and appraisal.	
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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: 2561501

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Smartcare Services

Registered provider address: 10 Watermark Way, Foxholes Business Park, Hertford, Hertfordshire SG13 7TZ

Responsible individual: Neville Henry

Registered manager: Natalie Power

Inspector

Jo Tarbie, Social Care Inspector

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