

2561501

Registered provider: Smartcare Services

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a privately owned children's home. The home's statement of purpose states that the home cares for up to four children with social and/or emotional difficulties.

The home was registered by Ofsted in April 2020.

The current manager was registered with Ofsted in May 2021.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 2 and 3 December 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 18 to 19 May 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: not previously inspected

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Recent inspection history

Inspection date

Not previously inspected

Inspection type**Inspection judgement**

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children have trusted and secure relationships with staff. They enjoy spending time with staff, participating in activities and mealtimes and having important discussions through key-work sessions. Children say that they feel respected and their views are listened to and acted upon.

Children live healthy lives. Their social, emotional and mental health needs are very well understood and met. Managers and staff have promoted good health throughout the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Children have excellent opportunities to learn. These opportunities are tailored to meet their specific learning needs. This has meant that children have made good progress with education and attainment despite the restrictions and disruptions to education during the pandemic.

Staff and managers support children's contact with their families when it is safe to do so. Staff support children exceptionally well to improve relationships with family members. This has helped children to settle in the home and make progress.

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

Children say that they feel safe in the home. They have trusted relationships with staff and feel able to routinely discuss queries or worries they may have.

Staff manage children's complex behaviours well. Children receive good guidance and there are clear boundaries in place to support staff to provide safe care. This is also the case for children who are subject to deprivation of liberty court orders. Staff are familiar with children's vulnerabilities, and this helps them to anticipate and address children's presenting behaviours.

Staff supervision and vigilance help to reduce children's risk-taking behaviours. Comprehensive risk assessments help staff to identify and anticipate risks.

Allegations against staff are managed well. The manager seeks advice from the designated officer when required. Staff demonstrate a sound knowledge of what to do if a child makes an allegation against another member of staff. This supports the safe care of children.

When children go missing from the home, staff manage this well by following the appropriate procedures. There are effective strategies in place that help to reduce the risk of harm to children if they are missing from the home. However, regulations are not always followed, as one serious incident was not reported to Ofsted, and one incident was reported late.

The home's environment is safe and comfortable. Children say that they like their rooms and are given the opportunity to make their space more homely.

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

The current manager has been in post since December 2020 and has been registered with Ofsted since May 2021. Staff say that they feel supported by the manager. The manager is available to staff in a leadership and mentoring capacity.

Staff and managers receive a good induction and training. Although staff and managers receive supervision, this is not yet embedded in its frequency and quality. Annual staff appraisals have not yet taken place. This means that staff's development needs and areas of poor practice are not being reviewed.

Leaders and managers do not demonstrate effective oversight of electronic records. The home's technology has been changed in response to poor record-keeping systems. However, the loss of partial records for one child shows that recording systems do not support the safe storage of information.

Leaders and managers are late in providing their quality-of-care review report, as required by regulation. This requirement was unmet at the most recent assurance visit to the home by Ofsted in December 2020. The report does not review the overall quality of the service effectively. This means that managers do not have good oversight of the areas for development at the home or any cohesive plans for future improvements.

The statement of purpose does not provide accurate information about the home; nor does it identify the children's home by its registered name. This has meant that stakeholders and external professionals did not recognise the name of the home that children were living in. This has the potential to negatively impact on the accurate sharing of information and to create confusion. In addition, the statement of purpose is not clear about the home's objectives and limitations in relation to the deprivation of liberty of children.

The home currently employs one permanent staff member. The home continues to rely heavily on agency staff. While the home has managed to use a core number of agency staff, leaders and managers are yet to recruit permanent staff effectively.

Leaders and managers are committed to children's well-being and place their welfare at the forefront of all they do. Achieving placement goals and offering children a safe, stable environment are priorities for leaders. Managers and staff work hard to offer positive experiences to children.

The manager is developing good working relationships within the community to support children to safely access activities and mentoring groups.

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 registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; a child protection enquiry involving a child — is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e))	21 August 2021
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.	21 August 2021

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))	
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. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that staff receive supervision and appraisals in line with the home's statement of purpose.	21 August 2021
The registered person must— keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and	21 August 2021

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 (3)(a)(b) (5)) In particular, this relates to ensuring that the statement of purpose is updated to include information on the home's management of deprivation of liberty orders, and that the statement of purpose clearly and accurately identifies the registered name of the children's home.	
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. Case records must be kept— if the child dies before attaining the age of 18, for 15 years from the date of the child's death; in cases not falling within sub-paragraph (a), for 75 years from the child's date of birth; securely in the children's home during the period when the child to whom the case records relate is accommodated there; and in a secure place after the child has ceased to be accommodated in the home. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(b)(c)(d)) In particular, this relates to ensuring that systems used for recording of information securely store children's records to guard against the loss of records.	21 August 2021

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that no more than half the staff on duty at the home at any one time, by day or night, are from an external agency. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.17)

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: Gamila Higgins

Registered manager: Natalie Power

Inspector

Jayshree Pillay, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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