

2561501

Registered provider: Smartcare Services

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately run children's home provides care for up to four children. The provider states in their statement of purpose that they provide care for children with social and/or emotional difficulties. The home registered with Ofsted in April 2020.

The current manager registered with Ofsted in May 2021.

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 April 2022

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 **good**

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

Date of last inspection: 18 May 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/05/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

There were three children living in the home at the time of this inspection. Feedback was only provided from one child, as one child declined to speak with the inspector and another was missing from care and away from the home during the inspection. Children were observed to be relaxed, happy and comfortable in the home.

Managers and staff strive to help children to achieve academic success. Children who struggle to engage in education are supported to attend their tuition. Staff advocate strongly for children with local authorities to ensure that children have some form of education provision. As a result, children who have had long absences from school re-engage in education.

Staff support children to lead healthy lifestyles and achieve better physical and mental health. A diabetes nurse said, 'Staff brought her to her recent appointment and were knowledgeable about her. They call to keep us updated.'

Children have opportunities to have fun. Staff make sure that children access recreational activities and explore their talents. For example, one child showed an interest in basketball and showed promising football skills. The staff have supported the child to attend regular football coaching and to go to watch a professional basketball game.

Staff support children to spend time with their family when it is safe to do so. Staff support children to maintain relationships with those who are important to them. This positive support helps children to develop and maintain important relationships.

Staff restrict the children's access to the kitchen and lounge at night. This action is not risk assessed or evidenced as proportionate to the risks posed to and/or by the children living in the home.

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

Staff focus their efforts on building positive and meaningful relationships with children. This child-centred care helps children to feel safe and know that staff care about them. One parent said, 'She is very safe here. My mum also spoke to the staff and she was very impressed with the home and the staff.'

Staff understand children's individual needs, risks and vulnerabilities. They use this informed knowledge to help children to make safe decisions. As a result, children's episodes of going missing from the home significantly reduce. However, staff do not always keep good records of information obtained from return home interviews. This is a missed opportunity to evaluate themes and patterns related to episodes of children going missing from home.

Allegations against staff are managed well. Staff demonstrate a good knowledge of the policies and procedures relating to the management of allegations against senior staff and whistle-blowing procedures. Consequently, this helps to keep children safe.

Children receive good guidance to help them to keep themselves safe. Additionally, 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.

The use of physical restraint is rare. Staff have only used physical restraint once since the last inspection, when it was necessary to safeguard children and others. However, the record did not contain all relevant information, such as the type of hold used.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is managed by a suitably qualified registered manager. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the home experiencing staffing instability and difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff. The home has used a core group of agency staff to cover shifts. The manager demonstrated her commitment to the staff and children by covering shifts herself to ensure that children received good-quality care and were protected. However, this impacted on the quality of the manager's oversight of the records in the home.

Despite the manager's best efforts to work with the upgraded recording systems, managers state that records continue to be lost. This has impacted negatively on the manager's time, as much of her time has focused on recovering records. Leaders have decided to bring in a recording system that is fit for purpose, however, this has not yet been implemented. The requirement for recording has been repeated from the last inspection.

Some stakeholders and external professionals do not recognise the registered name of the home due to managers and staff referring to the home by the provider's name. This has created confusion and has the potential to negatively impact on the accurate sharing of information.

Staff are well supported. They benefit from regular supervision, appraisals and team meetings. However, supervision and appraisal records are not always sufficiently detailed. This compromises the oversight of staff practice and development.

Leaders and managers actively and regularly monitor the quality of care provided to children. This helps leaders and managers to identify areas that require improvement.

The pandemic has impacted on staff undertaking face-to-face training. Additionally, two members of staff have not kept up to date with their core online training. Staff have also not completed training that is specific to the needs of children in their

care, including in attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The manager supports staff with on-the-job training and coaching, which has reduced any impact on children due to the lack of staff training.

Leaders and managers plan carefully for the matching of new children moving into the home. However, impact risk assessments do not include the manager's evaluation of risk and any mitigating and support factors. This compromises the decision-making when new children move into the home.

Leaders and managers work very well with other agencies and carers to support the day-to-day care of children. However, leaders and managers have failed to consult with safeguarding partners when updating the location risk assessment. This does not equip leaders to respond effectively to risks related to the location of the children's 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, 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
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 (5)) In particular, this relates to ensuring that the home uses its registered name as stated in the statement of purpose in all communications with stakeholders and professionals in matters that relate to the home.	10 June 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. 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 refers to:	10 June 2022

ensuring that systems used for recording of information securely store children's records to guard against the loss of records; ensuring that full records are kept of children's daily experiences, including efforts made by staff to encourage children to attend and engage in education and develop good routines; ensuring that all the relevant details are captured when keeping records of restraint, such as the type of hold used; ensuring that full records are kept of the evaluation of risk when conducting impact risk assessments and how any identified risk will be managed.	
The registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children's home at least once in each calendar year taking into account the requirement in regulation 12(2)(c) (the protection of children standard). When conducting the review, the registered person must consult, and take into account the views of, each relevant person. (Regulation 46 (1) (2))	10 June 2022
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; (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(d)) In particular, this relates to ensuring that staff receive training to meet the needs of each child in their care, such as in ASD and ADHD.	10 June 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that, just as in a family home, children should be able to access all shared areas of their home, including the kitchen, unless there are specific reasons why this would not meet a child's needs. Any

decisions to limit a child's access to any area of the home must only be made where this is intended to safeguard the child's welfare. All decisions should be informed by a rigorous assessment of that individual child's needs, be properly recorded and be kept under regular review. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10)

- The registered person should ensure that the content and/or outcomes of supervision sessions are recorded and that both the person giving supervision and the staff member have a copy of the record. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.5)

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

Jayshree Pillay, Social Care Inspector

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