

2565716

Registered provider: Middlesbrough Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a local authority. It provides care for up to six children who may have emotional and/or social difficulties.

At the time of the inspection, the home was providing care for three children.

The home currently does not have a registered manager. A new manager has been in post since June 2023 and intends to make an application to become the registered manager.

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 September 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **requires improvement to be good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

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: 14 February 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/02/2023	Full	Good
19/10/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

Children's overall experience of living in the home is variable. One child scored living in the home as eight and a half out of 10, and spoke positively about their relationships with staff and experience of living in the home. However, another child is experiencing peer bullying within the home, which is not being effectively managed by the staff. On one occasion, the staff called the police to manage a child's behaviour.

Work needs to be undertaken to make the home a welcoming and homely environment for children to live in. There are no photos of the children or any other evidence of the children's presence anywhere in the home. The lack of garden furniture prevents the children from spending time outside with each other and the staff. Children also say that they are not allowed to paint their bedrooms. This does not promote the children's identity and sense of belonging.

Children have access to independent advocates and feel confident in contacting them should an issue arise. However, children are not aware of how to access the home's complaints procedures. If children want to raise a complaint confidentially, they are not able to do so.

Children who have not attended school in the past are now engaging with informal education daily. Children have clear education plans in place. The manager engages with relevant professionals, including the virtual school, and attends education meetings and advocates on the children's behalf. This supports children with their progression in education.

When children move on from the home in a planned way, this is managed sensitively and with care. Transition plans are in place for children. One child who has moved on from the home described the home as being 'the best children's home they have lived in'. The child remains in regular contact with the staff and knows that 'the staff are always there to help'.

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

Children say that they feel safe living in the home and can identify a trusted adult to speak to should they have any worries or concerns.

While staff spoken to during the inspection demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding of safeguarding procedures, in practice, this has not always been apparent. Three incidents have been identified where staff have not followed the correct safeguarding procedures. Two of these shortfalls were not identified and addressed by the previous manager. The current manager and senior leaders took

decisive action following the third incident to ensure the ongoing safety and well-being of the children.

When children move in to the home the current manager completes a dynamic risk assessment. This is detailed and considers the potential risks to all the children as well as what steps the staff can take to reduce the risks. However, examples have been identified where children have been accepted into the home without the previous manager completing this work. This means that children have come to live in the home without all the risks being appropriately evaluated, potentially placing children at risk.

The smoke alarms in one part of the home are not working. Should a fire occur in the home, staff and children would not be alerted to this in the other part of the home. However, when highlighted during the inspection, senior leaders took immediate action to ensure the work was scheduled to be completed as soon as possible and an interim safety plan put in place to ensure the safety of both children and staff should a fire occur.

Leaders and managers do not have a clear understanding of the level and frequency of bullying within the home. Not all incidents of bullying are being recorded and staff do not consistently challenge this behaviour. Little work has been undertaken with the children to repair their relationship. During the inspection, immediate action was taken by senior leader to address this shortfall, including the implementation of an immediate safety plan, training for all staff, and revisiting the procedure of responding to and reporting incidents of bullying with all staff.

When children go missing from the home, staff consistently follow the home's missing-from-home procedure. However, when children return to the home, return-home interviews are not always completed. Staff do not understand the reason for children going missing and whether there are any issues within the home that may need to be considered.

Staff routinely lock the kitchen door on an evening. The locking of doors is not undertaken in line with the relevant regulations. This denies children access to these areas of the home.

Children's safety plans do not always contain the current risks for children. This means that staff do not have the up-to-date information about children and how to manage the risks effectively.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The lack of effective management oversight of the home by the previous manager has led to significant shortfalls. The previous manager's lack of physical presence within the home has negatively affected the quality of care provided to the children, the adherence to safeguarding procedures, the performance of staff, and how the home functions.

There is a new manager in post. She has a clear vision of how the service needs to develop and improve. She has a strong presence in the home and ensures that she spends time with the children. Staff describe her as being supportive and a 'breath of fresh air'.

While the use of holds and consequences within the home is appropriate, the recording of these events is not completed in line with the relevant regulations. There is a lack of management scrutiny by the previous manager on these records. This means that the effectiveness of the use of these measures within the home cannot be appropriately evaluated.

Not all safeguarding incidents have been appropriately notified to the regulator. On other occasions, there has been a delay in notifications being received. This prevents Ofsted from reviewing the incidents and taking appropriate steps to ensure the safety and well-being of the children.

The manager completes an assessment of the location of the home and considers potential risks and the measures required to help to protect children. However, this does not include feedback. This means that the views of each relevant person have not been taken into account when considering the potential risks within the locality.

Not all staff have completed the provider's mandatory refresher training for safeguarding, fire awareness, and physical intervention. This means that some staff are not appropriately qualified to meet the needs of the children in their care.

Since the new manager has been in post, all staff have been receiving regular supervision in line with the provider's own supervision policy. However, the quality of the recording of these sessions remains poor. There is no evidence of reflective supervision. This means that staff are not being provided with the opportunity to reflect on and amend their practice.

There is an inconsistent approach to recording information in children's documents. One example was identified which contained blaming and unhelpful language about a child when describing an incident. This was not identified as not being appropriate or addressed by the previous manager. This is not helpful for children when seeking access to their files.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding; help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; communicate to each child expectations about the child's behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding; help each child to develop the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitative or harmful relationship; strive to gain each child's respect and trust; understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children;	5 November 2023

are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same; de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children; understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; and have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them; and that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(iii)(iv)(v)(vii)(viii)(ix)(x)(xi)(xii)(xiii)(b))	
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; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home’s child protection policies; that the effectiveness of the home’s child protection policies is monitored regularly. (Regulation 12 (1))(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vii)(e)) This specifically relates to dynamic risk assessments and safety plans.	5 November 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— 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; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(g)(ii)(h))	5 November 2023
After consultation with the fire and rescue authority, the registered person must— take adequate precautions against the risk of fire, including the provision of suitable fire equipment in the children's home; and make arrangements for persons working at the home to receive suitable training in fire prevention. (Regulation 25 (1)(a)(c))	5 November 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; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.	5 November 2023

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably; provide to children personal items that are appropriate for their age and understanding; and 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)(b)(vii)(viii)(c)(i))	
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))	5 November 2023
The registered person must ensure that— the privacy of children is appropriately protected; children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and	8 September 2023

any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises— is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home; is necessary and proportionate; is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21 (a)(b)(c)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))	
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out— how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home; and the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and	5 November 2023

within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b) (3)(a)(ii)(iv)(v)(vii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)) This specifically relates to records of holds and consequence records.	
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))	5 November 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children are aware of the complaints procedure and are able to access the forms and make a complaint without the need to ask staff, in order to protect their own privacy. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.13)
- The registered person should ensure that when a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority provides an opportunity for the child to have an independent return-home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: 2565716

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Middlesbrough Borough Council

Registered provider address: Middlesbrough House, 50 Corporation Road,
Middlesbrough TS1 2RH

Responsible individual: Robert Hamer

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Paula Shepherd, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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