

2663221

Registered provider: Holywell Children's Services Limited

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and operated by a private provider. It is registered to provide care for up to two children with social and emotional needs. One child was living at the home at the time of this inspection.

There has been no registered manager since 15 March 2024.

Inspection date: 29 October 2025

Date of last inspection: 22 April 2025

Judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At these inspections, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

We identified the following serious and widespread concerns in relation to the care and protection of children, and the leadership and management of the home, at this assurance inspection.

There has been no registered manager in post since March 2024. The interim manager is not receiving regular supervision. The lack of consistent management support and oversight undermines the effectiveness and stability of leadership within the home.

Leadership and staffing arrangements lack consistency and stability. The interim manager, alongside other managers within the provider network, are working across multiple homes. In addition, staff from other settings within the organisation regularly work at this home. These arrangements have led to disruption in the organisation's day-to-day running of the home, weakened accountability, reduced staff morale and adversely affected the quality of care provided to children.

Care planning is ineffective and does not demonstrate that children's needs are thoughtfully considered or that associated risks are appropriately managed. One child moved into the home whose involvement in criminal activity had a significant and detrimental impact on other children already living there. Leaders and managers failed to consider how these risks would impact other children or how they would be managed and reduced. This reflects a repeated failure to assess and mitigate known risks, resulting in ongoing negative consequences for the children already living at the home.

One child moved into the home in July 2025 with known risks related to arson. Despite this, a fire risk assessment by a qualified professional was not completed until September 2025. The assessment identified several significant fire safety concerns. At the time of this assurance inspection, a number of the recommended actions had still not been completed, even though the deadlines for doing so had passed. Leaders and managers do not demonstrate a clear understanding of their roles in protecting children or take appropriate action to reduce known risks.

Ongoing concerns have been raised during inspections about the unacceptable standards of the home environment. During this inspection, the child's bedroom and ensuite bathroom were found to be untidy, unhygienic and in need of repair. This included a damaged door, which had not been reported for repair. Such conditions do not provide children with a safe, warm and nurturing environment.

A child who had lived at the home for over three years transitioned to a new placement with a broken dental brace, which staff had not attempted to get

repaired prior to them moving on. Additionally, there is a concerning pattern of children experiencing significant weight gain after moving into the home. This does not demonstrate that children are supported to lead healthy, active lifestyles or that their physical health needs are given sufficient priority.

Several members of staff have exceeded the required timescale for completing their qualifications, including one who has worked for the provider for over four years. There is no structured plan or sufficient support in place to enable these staff members to complete their qualifications in a timely manner. This is a breach in regulation.

Despite these shortfalls, there are some areas of positive practice within the home. Staff who work directly with children have formed positive relationships with them and are attuned to their needs.

Staff know what action to take if a child goes missing from home and they respond appropriately to prevent and manage such incidents. They follow missing-from-care protocols and are proactive in their efforts to locate children, resulting in them returning home quickly. The recordings of missing episodes are detailed, and the manager reviews these incidents to identify and improve practice.

Staff do not request police involvement often. When they do, it is proportionate to the circumstances. The police are not called upon to replace staff intervention or to manage behaviour.

Staff undertake room searches when there is a clear safeguarding reason to do so. Wherever possible, children are informed prior to the search and are present during the search. This approach promotes children's safety, as well as maintaining their privacy and dignity.

Complaints made by children are taken seriously. Managers respond appropriately and conduct thorough investigations.

A review of the quality of care has been completed within the required timescales, and a previous identified action has been met. However, the review does not focus on the areas of high risk for the home or areas of learning. The actions identified for the coming period are few and limited in terms of driving improvement. Therefore, a recommendation has been made.

Safer recruitment practices ensure that staff are safely recruited.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/04/2025	Full	Good
05/03/2025	Full	Inadequate
15/11/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
30/11/2022	Full	Good

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 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 the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm; and that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(b)(d)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that relevant risk assessments are carried out in a timely manner by competent professionals. They must also ensure that the recommendations of these assessments are carried out promptly.	26 January 2026
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 work as a team where appropriate; and	26 January 2026

ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(e)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that there is continuity in the leadership and care provided to the children.	
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose; that arrangements are in place to— manage and review the placement of each child in the home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(ii)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that all relevant information required to make informed decisions about new admissions is sought in a timely way. Robust assessments must be completed prior to a child moving in, to determine if their needs can be met. The needs and compatibility of children already living in the home must also be carefully considered. Children whose needs cannot be met alongside the children who already live at the home must not be admitted. This requirement is restated.	26 January 2026
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;	26 January 2026

use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. 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. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(vii)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that children's bedrooms are clean and tidy, and broken items are repaired in a timely manner. The child should be encouraged to personalise their space. This requirement is restated.	
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 children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that each child has access to such dental, medical, nursing, psychiatric and psychological advice, treatment and other services as the child may require. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(c)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that children are supported to have healthy lifestyles and diets, and that emerging health needs are responded to promptly by staff.	26 January 2026
The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children's home if— there is no registered manager in respect of the home; If the registered provider appoints a person to manage the home, the registered provider must, without delay, give HMCI notice of—	26 January 2026

the name of the person so appointed; and the date on which the appointment takes effect. (Regulation 27 (1)(a) (2)(a)(b))	
The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children’s home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the for the work that the individual is to perform. For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained— the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) (“the Level 3 Diploma”); or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma. The relevant date is— in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home. (Regulation 32 (2)(a)(b) (3)(b) (4)(a)(b) (5)(a)) This requirement is restated.	26 January 2026
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development;	26 January 2026

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 (4)(a)(b)(c))

Specifically, the registered person must ensure that the manager receives regular supervision.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff support children with home study by encouraging them to learn independent study skills and help them to practise those skills. (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.18)
- The registered person is responsible for deciding what each Regulation 45 review should focus on, based on the specific circumstances of the home at that particular time and any areas of high risk to the children that the home is designed to care for. The review should enable the registered person to identify areas of strength and possible weakness in the home's care, which will be captured in the written report. The report should clearly identify any actions required for the next six months of delivery within the home and how those actions will be addressed. The whole review process and the resulting report should be used as a tool for continuous improvement in the home. (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.4)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2663221

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Holywell Children's Services Limited

Registered provider address: Dalton House, 9 Dalton Square, Lancaster LA1 1WD

Responsible individual: Sabe Connor

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Sarah Huntbatch, Social Care Inspector

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