

2671486

Registered provider: Oak House Children's Home Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned by a private provider and offers care for up to four children who experience social, emotional and learning difficulties.

At the time of the inspection, one child was living at the home.

There has been no registered manager at the home since June 2024.

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 April 2025

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: 24 April 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/04/2024	Full	Good
28/06/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
31/01/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

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

One child was living at the home and contributed to the inspection. No children have moved into or out of the home since the last inspection.

There have been several changes across senior leadership and management, which have contributed to staffing instability, lack of direction, and inconsistencies in practice and recording. This has affected the quality of care and overall experiences for children.

The child who lived at the home had been there for a lengthy period. They said they were happy living at the home and enjoyed their time there.

The child can identify adults they trust and can share concerns with. This has allowed the child to feel comfortable to express their wishes and feelings.

Staff, leaders and managers have helped the child make some progress. They are now better able to independently attend to their medical and personal health needs.

Staff encourage the child to have fun, and they plan activities around the child's interests. This includes dancing, swimming, escape rooms and going to the cinema. This helps the child to take part in activities that they enjoy.

Staff support the child in spending time with the people who are important to them. Family members regularly visit the home. This allows the child to maintain a sense of belonging.

The child attends and participates in education, and their educational attainment is improving. Positive working relationships between the school and the home have allowed the identification of additional areas of support for the child.

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

Several elements must improve before the child can receive consistently good help and protection. Although these shortfalls have not resulted in the child being harmed, they have the potential to do so, particularly when considered alongside the widespread management shortfalls.

Staff are not helping the child to think about online safety. Opportunities have been missed to support and develop children's learning about safe and age-appropriate internet use. The systems in place for monitoring children's internet use are not robust.

Staff are not confident in how to escalate whistle-blowing concerns outside of the home. This raises concerns around their ability to safeguard children.

Medication is required to meet the child's individual health needs. Staff generally administer medication safely; however, they do not always use the required methods for disposal. On one occasion, staff did not follow the home's internal policy when administering medication. Leaders and managers investigated the incident, but they did not promptly implement measures to prevent reoccurrence.

When consequences are used, they are proportionately linked to the cause of the issue. They are used to support better routines for the child. However, managers have not reviewed their effectiveness, reducing the potential for learning.

Despite these shortfalls, there are very few incidents or safety concerns for the child. The child has not been missing from care. Staff have managed the child's behaviour without the need to use physical intervention, and they have supported the child in such a way as to help them avoid inappropriate risk-taking behaviours.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

There have been extended periods of management absence at the home. Interim arrangements earlier in the year have not provided adequate oversight. Feedback from external professionals, family members and staff indicates that this lack of direction is a concern.

There has been no registered manager since June 2024. A manager was appointed, but they left after a few months without registering with Ofsted. Another manager has since been appointed and is due to start in May 2025. At present, the responsible individual and the recently appointed deputy manager are overseeing the home. They are beginning to understand and address the shortfalls. However, these changes are in their infancy.

There are not sufficient processes in place to enable leaders and managers to have effective oversight. This has contributed to leaders and managers being unable to identify areas that need addressing. For example, important records in the home have not always been kept up to date, and the quality of children's records varies.

The quality of care review carried out by leaders and managers is inadequate. It does not include feedback or identify the home's strengths and weaknesses. This hinders its ability to serve as a tool for ongoing improvement and understanding the experiences of children living at the home.

Team meetings take place monthly. However, these have focused heavily on the instability and anxiety of staff team, with limited focus on the needs and progression of the child.

Staff morale has been mixed since the last inspection. Several staff members have left the home, and new staff have since joined. The team remains new and less experienced. Despite this, staff are not receiving all the support they need. Appraisals have not been carried out. This is a missed opportunity to support professional development and improve individual practice.

Leaders and managers have not ensured that they have the necessary plans for the child. The child's local authority care plan and placement plan were not on file and could not be found during the inspection.

Leaders and managers have not consistently shared information about serious incidents with Ofsted. This prevents Ofsted from having good oversight of safeguarding concerns.

There is an extensive training package in place for staff. Leaders and managers have identified some future training intended to support staff in meeting the child's individual needs.

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 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; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; 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)(f)(h)) In particular, ensure that: staff practice issues are addressed effectively and actions identified as necessary to improve practice are implemented; systems are in place to support effective monitoring of the home's day-to-day operations; leaders and managers have effective oversight of all incidents; and written records include the necessary, relevant information.	4 July 2025
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—	4 July 2025

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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(vii)) In particular, ensure that staff understand the risks that children may face when using the internet. There must be well-developed strategies in place to keep children safe online and to support them in learning how to keep themselves safe. Additionally, ensure that staff are aware of the whistle-blowing policy and procedure.	
The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. In particular the registered person must ensure that— medicine which is prescribed for a child is administered as prescribed to the child for whom it is prescribed and to no other child. (Regulation 23 (1) (2)(b))	1 May 2025
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(e))	18 April 2025
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.	18 April 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that any consequences used to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour are subject to a regular review of their effectiveness. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.36)
- The registered person should ensure that annual appraisals are carried out, recorded, and made available to the staff member. Where reasonable and practical, the appraisals should include the opinions of other professionals who have worked with the staff member over the year and the children living in the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.5)
- The registered person should carry out a review that focuses on the quality of the care provided in the home, the experiences of children living there, and the effect that the care is having on outcomes and improvements for the children. The report should include analysis and evaluation of challenges. It should also include direct feedback from children, professionals and parents. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.2)

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: 2671486

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Oak House Children's Home Ltd

Registered provider address: ABC Care Solutions, 249 Cranbrook Road, Ilford IG1 4TG

Responsible individual: David Whitty

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Naomi Starbuck, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025