

2675807

Registered provider: Virtue Therapeutic Care and Education (East Sussex) Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is privately run and is registered to provide care for up to eight children who may experience social and emotional difficulties. Therapy is available to all children if required. There is a registered school on site. The inspectors only inspected the social care provision on this site. There are currently three children living in the home.

The home has been without a registered manager since October 2022. The interim manager has not applied to be registered.

This is the first inspection the home has received since registration.

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 January 2023

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 applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are cared for by a skilled and caring staff team. Children feel safe and are well looked after. One child described the home as 'amazing' and said that he wants to stay until he is 18.

Children make good educational progress. They are supported to attend mainstream school or the school that is on site. When children transfer to a mainstream school, there is good communication with all relevant professionals. This ensures that plans are in place to help children succeed in their new school. This has had a positive impact on children who have had disrupted education before living in the home.

The home is set up and run as a therapeutic community which is supported by an in-house counsellor. Daily community meetings and regular direct work with trusted staff allow children to make progress with their psychological well-being. Community meetings afford children the opportunity to share successes and difficulties that they have had during the day. Children trust each other and are supported by staff to understand and explore their relationships. This helps children to positively resolve any conflicts they have with each other.

Children attend a variety of different clubs, including football, bell ringing, horse riding and a gardening club. These are chosen by children through community meetings and discussions with staff. As a result, children are provided with new opportunities that they have not had before.

Children's individual religious needs are well met. Staff have a good understanding of different religions and places of worship. Children are encouraged and supported to attend their chosen place of worship.

Staff help children to develop independence skills. Two children regularly cook meals for everyone in the home. One child is excited about the opportunity to do this in the future.

Staff have positive working relationships with other professionals, which are focused on promoting the best outcomes for children. One child's social worker said, 'Management and staff are friendly and interact with professionals and children positively and promote independence for our children.'

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

Overall, risks for children are well identified by staff. Detailed risk assessments provide guidance to staff to help them manage children's behaviours. These are updated and shared with staff following any changes to children's behaviour.

On one occasion, staff did not follow the guidance detailed in a child's care plan to protect the child from harm when they gained access to the internet. Additionally, the home did not have an internet policy to provide staff with further guidance. This left the child vulnerable. The manager took immediate action when they became aware that staff had allowed the child to access the internet. The manager shared the concerns with external professionals and communicated the lessons learned with staff. However, until the manager took action, the child was not safeguarded effectively.

Staff respond appropriately when children go missing from home. Missing-from-care protocols provide staff with clear guidance to ensure that children return home safely. Staff support children on their return home and provide nurturing care. This is effective and there has been a significant reduction in children going missing from home. Consequently, this keeps children increasingly safe.

The manager has good recruitment practices in place. This ensures that new staff are safely recruited.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Since the home opened, the previous registered manager has resigned, and the home is being overseen by an interim manager. The interim manager has made a positive impact on the quality of care provided to children. She is therapeutic in her approach and demonstrates this practice to staff. Children and staff comment on how supportive she is.

The interim manager has not registered with Ofsted. There are no plans for her to register, and a long-term solution has not been found. Staff are aware of the temporary nature of the manager's role and are concerned about the future arrangements. This arrangement does not provide stability and security for children or staff.

The manager responds to complaints appropriately. Children feel listened to by the manager and good use of resolution work between children and staff has allowed for complaints to be resolved.

The manager has led improvements in providing staff with consistent support and supervision. Staff receive regular and effective supervision from the manager and feel supported by her.

Monitoring and review systems are effective and help the manager to understand the strengths and areas of development in the home. This is supported by the responsible individual, who regularly visits the home and has good oversight of the quality of care provided to children.

Monthly independent visits to the home have been inconsistent. Reports provided by the independent person do not always provide enough scrutiny and challenge about the quality of care in the home. These reports are not consistently sent to Ofsted in a timely way. Leaders and managers are aware of this and are considering what action to take to ensure that practice in this area improves.

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 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; that the effectiveness of the home's child protection policies is monitored regularly. (Requirement 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(e)) In particular, ensure that staff have appropriate guidance to keep children safe when using the internet.	28 February 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. (Requirement 13 (1)(a)(b)) In particular, ensure that the home has a manager who is registered with Ofsted.	28 February 2023

Recommendation

- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring, including under regulation 44, to ensure continuous improvement. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)

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: 2675807

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Virtue Therapeutic Care and Education (East Sussex) Limited

Registered provider address: Moran House, Suites 7 and 8, 449 to 451 High Road, Wilesden, London NW10 2JJ

Responsible individual: Matthew Wakeling

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Mark Newington, Social Care Inspector
Mike Simmonds, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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