

2704477

Registered provider: Optimum Youth Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately run home is registered to care for up to three children who experience emotional and social difficulties.

The home registered with Ofsted on 1 March 2023. The registered manager post has been vacant since 22 September 2023. A new manager has been in post since January 2024 and has submitted an application to register with Ofsted.

At the time of this inspection, two children were living at the home.

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 May 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 10 May 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/05/2023	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children receive child-centred care and make good progress from their starting points. They are helped and supported to build positive relationships with each other. Children are supported to understand and manage difficult life experiences. This helps them to develop coping strategies and build resilience, which enhances their growth and development. Staff know the children well and are proud of the progress they are making.

Children are able to stay in touch with their families, friends and other people who play a significant role in their lives. Families visit children in the home and have good relationships with staff. Each child's views and wishes regarding their family times are respected, and plans are put in place to make this safe and meaningful. This support has helped children to settle in the home, and they no longer go missing from the home.

Children's views and wishes are listened to. They are actively encouraged to be part of their own care planning. This supports children to develop a sense of ownership of their lives and helps them to make good progress. Some children said that they initially experienced difficult relationships with some members of staff, but managers listened to their views and took appropriate action.

Children's health needs are met well. Children attend all of their routine health appointments. Support is sought from specialists when necessary. Staff work closely with health professionals to ensure that children receive the appropriate support to meet their needs. Staff have provided a tailored support plan for one child to improve their lifestyle and overall health. This child's social worker commented that this was the best placement they could ever get.

The manager and staff take effective action when children are not in school. They talk with education professionals and provide children with educational activities at home. Staff are ambitious for children, and education is clearly a priority at this home. One child, who had not been in school before moving into the home, is now attending and is enjoying learning, and their attendance has significantly improved.

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

Children said that they feel safe. They can identify a trusted person to talk to if they have concerns. The stable and consistent home environment, together with the warmth and confidence of the staff, helps children to feel safe and secure.

Leaders and managers respond promptly to safeguarding concerns. They work in close partnership with safeguarding professionals, including the local authority designated officer. Leaders and managers complete thorough internal investigations

and implement an action plan, including safeguarding training, to ensure the safety of children. Staff also show an appropriate understanding of safeguarding procedures.

Children's individual positive behaviour support plans are effective. Staff set consistent boundaries and routines for children. There is a reward system that promotes and encourages positive behaviour. Staff receive reflective sessions to help de-escalate incidents. As a result, the number of incidents, including restraint, has reduced, and one child no longer requires their liberty to be restricted.

Staff support children to understand the risks posed to them when accessing the internet. Staff use individual sessions with children to help them develop their knowledge and understanding of the risks. There are effective strategies and monitoring systems in place to address any concerns raised. As a result, one child is now allowed to have a mobile phone and is kept safe when playing and working online.

Generally, staff manage incidents well and are able to de-escalate challenging situations. However, there have been some incidents where staff have had to call the police to manage children's behaviour. In addition, leaders and managers do not routinely review and evaluate significant incidents and concerns in order to identify any themes or patterns, including the language used by staff in incident reports. Therefore, opportunities to learn and improve staff practice to support children are missed.

The admissions process for new children moving into the home needs to be strengthened. Leaders and managers carry out an assessment of risk from the information provided in the referral and meet children before they move into the home. The assessment considers the needs and behaviours of new children as well as those of children already living in the home. However, there have been occasions where the home has been unsettled due to managers admitting children with similar needs, which has negatively impacted on the children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Leadership and management of this home are undermined by the absence of a permanent registered manager. The home has not had a registered manager since March 2023. The responsible individual oversees the day-to-day management of the home and acknowledges the shortfalls in leadership as a result of not having a registered manager.

Staff receive regular supervision and feel well supported. However, new staff do not have regular individual supervision at the frequency set out in the home's statement of purpose. In addition, staff have not received their annual appraisal, and managers do not record the induction or probation programme completed for new staff. The responsible individual is supporting the new manager to address these shortfalls.

The provider supports all staff to gain the level 3 diploma in residential childcare. Although staff receive a range of training to inform their practice, there are some gaps in staff's mandatory training.

Leaders and managers have failed to satisfactorily address all of the requirements raised at the previous inspection. This does not demonstrate that they have effective systems in place to monitor children's outcomes and ensure that continuous improvements are made.

Leaders and managers take a child-centred approach. They have aspirations for the children and are strong advocates for them. Because of this, children are making good progress from their starting points in all areas.

Professionals are positive about the impact staff are having on children's progress. Social workers and an independent reviewing officer spoke positively about the care provided to children and communication from staff. One social worker commented on how well the staff work with the network and how this had enabled their child to settle into the home well and prevent further placement breakdown.

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; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; 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)(h)) In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that they understand, monitor and review the quality of care provided to children and take effective action to address shortfalls in practice, including staff training. This requirement is restated.	19 July 2024
The registered person must— ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction; ensure that each permanent appointment of an employee is subject to the satisfactory completion of a period of probation. The registered person must ensure that all employees—	19 July 2024

undertake appropriate continuing professional development; have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (1)(a)(b) (4)(a)(c))	
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; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child’s welfare. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(vi)) In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that all significant incidents are appropriately reviewed and actions are taken to address any staff shortfalls.	19 July 2024
The care planning standard is that children— 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. (Regulation 14 (1)(b) (2)(a)) In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that all known and potential risks to children are thoroughly considered and assessed at the point of referral.	19 July 2024

Recommendations

- 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 about individual children in incident reports 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)
- The registered person should ensure that new staff receive regular individual supervision at the frequency set out in the home's staff induction programme. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)

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: 2704477

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Optimum Youth Care Limited

Registered provider address: 2a Rickyard Barn Stoke Road, Blisworth,
Northampton, Northamptonshire NN7 3DB

Responsible individual: Sarah Walters

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Dorothy Thompstone, Social Care Inspector
Jo Tarbie, Social Care Inspector

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