

2721681

Registered provider: Oakland Support Services Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is privately owned and provides care for up to four children who may require support with their social, emotional or mental health needs. At the time of this inspection, one child was living at the home.

The manager has been in post since November 2024 and is in the process of applying for registration with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 January 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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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: 25 September 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/09/2024	Full	Inadequate
07/03/2024	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

Since the last inspection, in September 2024, two children have moved out of the home. Managers made sure they had a positive ending, with thoughtful personalised touches, and they continue to have support from staff. Children give very positive feedback about the home. One child said living there was a 'fun, amazing journey'. One child remains living in the home. They are proud to say it has been their longest placement and they feel supported.

Children have comfortable, trusting and fun relationships with staff. Staff talk to children about their worries and respond to their changing needs. As a result, children have made progress in managing difficult emotions and are confident in expressing their views and wishes.

Children's education attendance is mixed. Two children had regular attendance and were making good progress. One child wants to be at college but has not had any education since the last inspection. This has had a huge impact on them. Managers have worked hard to secure support from relevant professionals to move things forward and taken action to help the child to make college applications. During the inspection, a pathway to apprenticeship programme was confirmed for the child.

Children are helped to have positive contact with their family. As a result, children are developing and sustaining relationships with people who are important to them. One parent said the staff are very good, and their child enjoys living in the home.

Children are offered opportunities to develop independent living skills and do the hobbies they enjoy. However, plans for activities are not organised in a way that motivates children and meets their individual needs. As a result, children lack a sense of purpose to their day. One child said that they feel bored and have nothing to get up for. Managers and staff genuinely care for children's needs and there are plans to make improvements in how children are supported with a meaningful daytime routine.

The home is nicely decorated and welcoming. Children enjoy spending time in the communal areas, and they are encouraged to choose personal pictures to put on the walls. Since the last inspection, many parts of the home have been refurbished. There are plans for ongoing decoration and improvement, however, there some areas where the level of cleanliness and personalisation is not of a good standard. The managers have plans for making improvements to these areas.

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

Since the last inspection, there has been a big investment in improving the home's processes to keep children safe. Staff have undertaken a range of training, and there are plans to consolidate learning through team days, workshops and individual mentoring. Significant improvements have been made in a short period of time, however, there are still shortfalls where some systems have been tested and identified as needing further improvement.

Care plans and risk assessments have been updated and are clear. Plans are child-centred and provide staff with up-to-date information about risk management. Care planning guides staff to use individualised approaches adapted to each child's needs. They involve the child by encouraging them to talk about their feelings and how to stay safe. As a result, children have been more open to telling staff about the issues they face, and they respond to staff advice.

Staff know how to use de-escalation techniques to manage serious incidents between children. They make plans to reduce the likelihood of incidents taking place and respond to unpredictable situations to keep children safe.

Staff understand how to restrain children when needed as a last resort. There have been incidents that have resulted in physical holds that have not been recognised as restraints. They have not been fully recorded or evaluated by managers, and children were not spoken to about the hold. Managers have sought advice about incidents, however, action taken to review them has been delayed. As a result, there has been no oversight or understanding of whether physical holds were appropriate, and no reflective learning on practice.

Staff know what to do if children go missing from home. They take action to follow or find children and seek advice from appropriate professionals, including speaking to police. However, there have been shortfalls in the action taken when a child has reported their location. For example, one child told staff they were with a friend not known to the home. Staff and managers spoke to the police, local authority and stayed in contact with the child but did not take effective action to arrange for them to be seen and brought home. Managers did not recognise that there may be unknown risks for the child in that location. Managers and staff rely on the children assessing their own risk, and as a result there is lack of action around children who are missing from home.

There has been an inconsistent response to supporting children in the event of accidental injury. For example, a child reported that they hurt their ankle and were in pain and declined first aid. Staff followed the home's written guidance, however these were not robust enough and medical advice was not sought because the child said they did not want it to be checked. As a result, the injury was not examined or treated by a professional. Since the incident, managers have put robust guidance in place for staff to follow.

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

Managers have reflected on how difficult the operation of the home has been since they came into post in November 2024. Despite dealing with several challenges, they demonstrate determination and commitment to making improvements. This means that positive progress has been made in a short period of time. Managers are realistic about what could be achieved, while remaining organised and focused on sustaining continued change. Some ambitious pieces of work have started, and time is being taken to launch them with staff to ensure new systems are successfully implemented.

The manager has quickly developed trusting relationships with children and gained respect from staff. They have a positive approach which has enabled the home to make progress. They understand the challenges being faced by the team and have worked alongside staff to help them through a difficult time. The team say they feel very supported and value the time the manager has given to help them. Staff are proud of how well they work together, and say the home is a lovely place to work.

Monitoring and oversight of the home have improved. When there have been uncertainties about how to respond to incidents, managers have sought advice and guidance. The manager needs to improve their knowledge of managing safeguarding incidents, and there is a development plan for the home in place for their continued induction in this area.

The Manager continues to take concerns around staff practice seriously. They follow appropriate process to ensure they are investigated, and follow-up action is taken. If children are involved, managers make sure that they can talk about what they have seen and process their thoughts and feelings.

Managers share information regularly with other professionals. Specialist referrals are made and advocated for, so that children have access to the support they need. Managers are confident in challenging external professionals if this is necessary to improve the support and help provided for children. One professional said they were grateful for the team's persistent work and the support offered to children.

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 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; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; 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; that the effectiveness of the home's child protection policies is monitored regularly. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)(e)) In particular, ensure that there are robust protocols in place for how to respond to missing-from-home incidents. The risks for children should be fully understood and action taken to ensure children are safe. Managers must ensure that incidents are	31 January 2025

reviewed and protocols for children staying away from home are agreed with the appropriate professionals.	
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 keep the behaviour management policy under review and, where appropriate, revise it. 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 name of the child; details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; 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 name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure; 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	31 January 2025

has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and

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) (2)
(3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c))

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that when children are not participating in education they are supported to be engaged in suitable structured activities. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.15)
- The registered person should ensure that the home maintains a clean and well-kept environment which supports children's physical, mental and emotional health. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 33, paragraph 7.3)

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: 2721681

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Oakland Support Services Ltd

Responsible individual: Post vacant

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Shirin White, Social Care Inspector

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