

SC007290

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a privately run children's home that provides care for up to four children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and mild mental health needs. The home registered with Ofsted in October 1998. The registered manager, who is also the home's responsible individual, registered with Ofsted at the same time.

This assurance inspection took place as a result of a serious incident involving a child while they were out in the community. There were two children living at the home at the time of the assurance inspection. One child spoke with the inspector.

Inspection date: 19 January 2023

Date of last inspection: 27 June 2022

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be 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 did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

The care of children

Children have trusted and secure relationships with staff. Children feel that staff are interested in their well-being and take any concerns they have seriously. Children know how to make complaints, but generally do not do so, choosing to speak with staff directly. When formal complaints are made, managers deal with these promptly and fairly.

Children's needs are met well by the manager and staff. Staff encourage children to lead healthy lifestyles, attend medical appointments, and follow recommended medical treatment plans. Staff ensure that children receive support, such as bereavement counselling, to improve their mental health and emotional well-being.

Children develop independence skills that help to prepare them for adulthood. Staff support them to complete practical daily skills, such as cooking and doing laundry. Some children receive help in applying for jobs and college courses.

Children's learning outcomes are variable. Some children engage in their education, while other children's attendance at school, college and home tutoring is very sporadic. As a result, they do not achieve their expected academic goals. This was highlighted as a shortfall at the previous inspection.

Children have good opportunities to share their views about the home and their experiences. Staff conduct individual key-work sessions regularly. These explore children's views about their progress and any issues that they may wish to raise. Children's meetings are also regularly held. This is another forum for children to share their views, and make suggestions. This helps to shape how their home is run.

The safety of children

Children say that they feel safe at their home and with the staff team. Children benefit from staff's good understanding of the home's child protection procedures and, in particular, how to manage allegations made against staff. This was not the case at the last inspection.

There has been one allegation made against a member of staff recently. Managers dealt with this appropriately, sensitively and promptly. The communication with other professionals, such as the designated officer and allocated social worker, is regular and effective.

Staff identify and understand the impact of the risks that children face. Risk assessments are detailed and relevant. Risk assessments include details of strategies that help to reduce risks to children. One child frequently goes missing from the home. Staff take appropriate action to encourage the child's prompt return home.

Staff support children to recognise situations that may cause them harm. Staff work diligently in partnership with external professionals to explore strategies and resources that help to keep children safe. A child's mentor said, 'Staff worked hard to keep him engaged with the home's services. They safeguarded him the best they could. It was a good placement and he was well looked after.'

Staff promote children's positive behaviour and use incentives to achieve this. Staff's use of restraint is rare. Restraint is used as a last resort in order to protect children and others from harm. However, one record of restraint was not promptly recorded after the incident and the information was not updated or accurate.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

The leadership and management of the home has improved since the home's last inspection. The registered manager is appropriately qualified, with extensive experience of running children's residential homes. The registered manager has returned from an extended leave of absence and has resumed implementing monitoring systems. For example, the managers' regular case file audits have resulted in staff recording more-detailed, meaningful accounts of children's experiences.

The recent redecoration of the home makes the premises more homely and comfortable. All health and safety concerns highlighted at the last inspection have been resolved.

Staff receive regular formal supervision from their line managers. Leaders and managers have an increased presence at the home and are readily available to staff and children for informal discussions. Managers' support of staff is excellent, and staff benefit from regular team meetings, case reviews and peer support meetings. In response to the recent serious incident, staff have been provided with access to external counselling services.

Staff training requires improvement. Not all staff have completed restraint training, safeguarding and behaviour management training. This does not support staff to provide children with high-quality care. Staff training logs are inaccurate and do not confirm which training staff have completed. This makes it difficult to identify and address staff development needs.

Leaders and managers have successfully resolved most of the shortfalls identified at the last inspection. However, staff continue to use closed-circuit television (CCTV) to view communal areas in the home. Managers are unable to justify this use of CCTV as children currently living in the home do not require this level of surveillance.

Managers are yet to develop guidance that outline situations when CCTV can be used.

Managers and staff work effectively with children's professional network and parents. This helps staff to provide personalised care that meets children's needs. A child's mentor said, 'The staff team are very knowledgeable and efficient with their paperwork. Communication is good. He [child] settled in well, and he was staff's priority. It's the longest placement that he had.'

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/06/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
11/01/2022	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
28/09/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
20/06/2019	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, 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 education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— promote opportunities for each child to learn informally; help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(v)(viii)) This refers specifically to staff adopting strategies to encourage children's engagement and attendance in education, and that structure is provided for learning opportunities during the school day if formal attendance is not occurring.	1 March 2023
The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if— the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children; and the monitoring or surveillance is no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child's need for privacy. (Regulation 24 (1)(a)(d))	1 March 2023
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development.	15 March 2023

(Regulation 33 (4)(a)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that all staff complete training in safeguarding, de-escalation techniques, restraint, conflict resolution and behavioural management.	
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; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and 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)(g)(ii)(h)) This is with particular reference to leaders and managers ensuring that systems are in place to offer consistent practice, monitoring and review to improve the quality of records of restraint incidents and staff training. The registered person must devise policy and practice guidance that outlines staff's use of CCTV.	1 March 2023

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC007290

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Responsible individual: Deborah Pacquette

Registered manager: Deborah Pacquette

Inspector

Sandra Jacobs-Walls, Social Care Inspector

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