

SC007290

Full 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 who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and mild mental health problems.

The registered manager has been registered since 2007.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 24 February 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 September 2021

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: 20 June 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/06/2019	Full	Good
07/08/2018	Full	Good
05/09/2017	Full	Good
04/01/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

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

At the time of the inspection there were three children living in the home. The children are of similar adolescent age and originate from diverse backgrounds, including African, Caribbean and white British heritage.

Children's progress is inconsistent. Staff sometimes demonstrate their ability to work with partner agencies to improve children's progress. Staff offer support to children in work-based opportunities and provide clear transition plans in preparation for them leaving the home. However, when children arrive at the home, expectations about important routines are not always agreed at placement planning meetings with children, parents and social workers. Managers do not give staff clarity on how to establish routines. Therefore, children's engagement and progress can be slow and subject to drift.

Children's views on decision-making about their care is limited. There are regular meetings for children and a suggestion book where they can share their views. However, managers and staff do not evidence that these views have been considered. Children's files do not always show their agreement to decisions and plans made about them. Consequently, it feels like decisions are made about children and not with them.

Staff do not always challenge children about specific behaviours. Although this relaxed approach has allowed some children to flourish, staff have not been proactive in motivating all children to attend school or carry out educational activities. This creates a culture within the home that indicates to children that they do not have to engage in education or start to make more positive choices.

A strength of this home is how staff prioritise forming positive relationships with children. Staff work with children at their pace and have a consistent approach to slowly building relationships with them. Staff believe that this allows children to see the home as a place of safety and care.

The staff team acknowledges and respects children's ethnic diversity. Staff help children to feel comfortable in their physical presentation, such as ensuring good hygiene. They understand that children use hairstyles and fashion to express their personalities and culture. Staff ensure that books in the home include information about race, language and ethnicity. This allows children to feel accepted and appreciated.

Children spoke positively about all the staff and the registered manager. One child spoke about staff perseverance in offering them support throughout their time at the home. Some children who had left the home had made positive

comments about how staff had improved their lives and provided them with opportunities for learning.

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

Staff do not use referral information to fully consider the needs of all children. Although placing authorities provide information about children who move into the home, leaders and managers do not evaluate the potential impact on the children already living there. This is particularly evident with emergency or short-term placements. Consequently, there is an increased risk of placement instability.

Staff do not manage known risks to children effectively. Leaders and managers do not always provide staff with focused and clear ways of working with children. For example, they do not provide guidance on how to adapt the care provided to children according to their cognitive abilities or how to use historical knowledge of children's behaviours to change practice in the home. Consequently, staff do not always have suitable strategies to prevent further harm to children.

Staff do not have a streamlined approach when children go missing from the home. They do not always request return home interviews from local authorities or escalate this when they do not happen. There are inconsistent requests for professional or strategy meetings in circumstances where children have repeated patterns of being missing from the home or when they are missing overnight. When children are initially reluctant to share with staff where they have been, staff are not persistent in other ways to gather this information. Therefore, opportunities to form an efficient framework around the child are missed.

Staff do not consistently update other professionals as agreed. The police said that a document setting out and agreeing a specified way of working had not been signed and returned. In addition, staff are not using protocols regarding online reporting consistently. A social worker said that while staff had informed them of missing incidents, some details relating to the incidents were not specified. This means that there is not a strong network response to safeguard children.

Professional and family feedback is varied. Some individuals spoke of good communication with the staff team. They receive regular updates, and for some children clear progress has been made. However, some professionals stated that staff do not offer enough focus and structure for children.

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

Leaders and managers are passionate about providing a warm and nurturing environment for children. Managers can name their future expectations for

children and want them to achieve and to be healthy and happy. However, managers do not have effective processes in place to achieve this. Consequently, care planning for children can drift and appear unfocused.

Leaders and managers are actively involved in children's daily care. This means that senior managers can develop meaningful relationships with children. However, managers do not focus enough on providing oversight or tracking of children's progress according to their plans. Furthermore, they do not ensure prompt interventions are implemented when needed.

Staff are using different recording systems. Information in relation to medication, staff training and some case recording is kept on paper files, computer systems and emails. Staff and managers do not have clarity on which system to use. Therefore, information is sometimes contradictory. This is confusing and prevents managers from having a clear oversight of children's care and of decision-making.

Leaders and managers do not have strong monitoring and review systems in place. Although staff describe managers as supportive and approachable, supervision documents are not in all staff files, and discussions with children are not consistently recorded. The leadership team is aware of the shortfalls and of the need to develop more consistent processes to promote decisive and effective practice.

Some of the requirements and recommendations from the previous full inspection in 2019 have not been completed. The provider's website and statement of purpose still provide misleading information about the legal entity of the home. The provider has attempted to correct this, but the changes are insufficient. This information is misleading for commissioners and placing authorities.

Managers do not ensure that all essential records are kept up to date. For example, admission and discharge records do not include all the required information. The 'Children's Guide' has the incorrect Ofsted address. This missing information is required for the safe day-to-day operation of the home and to contribute to children's understanding of their histories.

Leaders follow safe recruitment practices. Inductions and clear probation periods are given to new staff. More-experienced staff participate in regular appraisals. Leaders and managers ensure staff consistency with minimal use of agency staff. This was especially evident in the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, when leaders minimised the impact of staff sickness, staff self-isolating and staff on furlough.

Leaders have not ensured that alternative qualifications held by some staff are equivalent to the required Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare or the Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management for Residential Childcare. Consequently, some staff may not hold the required qualification to work in the

children's home. Two staff are yet to complete the Level 3 diploma within the required timeframe. However, within the context of COVID-19, this is understandable.

Two previous requirements about the statement of purpose and staff qualifications have been reinstated. New requirements have been made in respect of the education of children, the protection of children, leadership and management, management qualifications and other records. Three recommendations have been made.

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 into school and to provide structure for learning opportunities during the school day if formal attendance is not occurring.	15 November 2021
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;	15 November 2021

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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vi)) This is specifically in relation to managers making appropriate matching decisions, recognising and responding quickly and efficiently to increasing risks and ensuring that staff respond consistently to safeguarding concerns.	
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))	15 November 2021

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 care provided to children.	
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose. (Regulation 16 (1) (5)) This refers specifically to ensuring that the privately owned status of the home is reflected in the statement of purpose, on the company website and on any other relevant documents.	15 November 2021
A person may only manage a children's home if— having regard to the size of the home, its statement of purpose, and the number and needs (including any needs arising from any disability) of the children— the person has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills to manage the home effectively and lead the care of children. For the purposes of paragraph (1)(b)(i), a person has the appropriate experience and qualification if the person has— by the relevant date, attained— the Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 5 Diploma"); or a qualification which the registered provider considers to be equivalent to the Level 5 Diploma. (Regulation 28 (1)(b)(i) (2)(c)(i)(ii)) In particular, senior managers must satisfy themselves that the registered manager holds a qualification that is equivalent to the Level 5 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England).	15 November 2021

The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform. For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained— the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a) (3)(b) (4)(a)(b)) In particular, the registered person must satisfy themselves that staff have the Level 3 Diploma or an equivalent qualification.	15 November 2021
Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children's home. The registered person must— maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4; ensure that the records are kept up to date. (Regulation 37 (1) (2)(a)(b)) This specifically refers to ensuring that the admission and discharge log contains the discharge date and full address details upon leaving.	15 November 2021

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff are proactive in encouraging children to regularly participate in a wide range of activities which nurture their skills and interests. These activities should occur inside and outside of the home (where appropriate). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 31, paragraphs 6.4 and 6.5)
- The registered person should ensure that children's views about the home's care are sought and considered to inform and support continued improvement in the quality of care provided. These should be clearly recorded in records and children should be able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted upon. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)
- 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. They should develop more consistent recording processes to promote decisive and effective practice. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: SC007290

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Deborah Pacquette

Responsible individual: Deborah Pacquette

Registered manager: Deborah Pacquette

Inspectors

Tolulope Sawyerr, Social Care Inspector
Christine Kennet, Social Care Inspector

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