

SC020558

Registered provider: Overley Hall Limited

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 22 children with severe learning disabilities, sensory impairments and autism. At the time of the inspection, there were 15 children living at the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in April 2025 and has relevant experience and qualifications. The registered manager was not present during the inspection. The inspection was led by the responsible individual.

The home is situated on the same site as a special school. A separate residential home for young adults, registered with the Care Quality Commission, is on the school grounds. The inspectors only inspected the children's social care provision at this site.

Inspection dates: 28 to 30 April 2026

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	inadequate
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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: 24 June 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/06/2025	Full	Good
30/09/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
31/10/2023	Full	Good
01/11/2022	Full	Good

Summary of findings

There are weaknesses in leadership and management that limit the quality and consistency of care children receive. Overall, staff usually meet children's day-to-day needs and children are making progress. Staff support children to have positive experiences. However, there are occasions when staff do not provide adequate supervision or do not supervise children in line with their plans. In addition, senior leaders across the site do not work together effectively, which results in a lack of collaborative working.

Inspection judgements

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

Staff support children to spend time with people who are important to them. However, visitors are not welcomed to spend time with children in their bedrooms or shared living spaces. Managers and staff have not taken a creative or flexible approach to enabling this. Staff communicate regularly with parents and, for many children, this includes daily updates. However, communication lacks transparency because parents do not have direct access to children's records, including incident reports. These shortfalls create barriers in relationships between staff and parents, leaving some parents unclear about their children's full experiences of living at the home.

All children attend the on-site school. Staff support children to move between the home and school in a planned and calm way. When children find these transitions difficult, staff respond patiently and in a nurturing manner. However, collaborative working between the home and school is weak due to ineffective communication by leaders. As a result, decisions are made in isolation and are not shared in a timely or productive way. For example, decisions about the introduction of school bags and school access to children's medication have been a source of dispute and are not consistently focused on children's best interests.

Staff help children to enjoy a range of activities at the home, including sensory play, soft play, and arts and crafts. Children also take part in activities they enjoy in the community, such as going to the park, local walks and shopping. Staff support children to celebrate their birthdays in ways that reflect their preferences. These experiences are generally well planned, with staff considering children's needs, risks and interests. For example, children enjoyed a group holiday last year, and one child had a shorter break in a quieter location to meet their individual needs. However, staff are hopeful that this child will join the main group holiday in the future.

Staff communicate effectively with children and support them to use their communication aids. As a result, children are able to express their feelings, needs and choices using a range of communication methods. Several children have made strong progress in developing their communication skills.

Staff support children to improve their health by providing regular opportunities to keep active. Swimming is a frequent and popular activity for all children, and many also enjoy spending time in the outdoor spaces at the home. Some children have made good progress in broadening their diets, moving from very restrictive eating to enjoying a wider range of healthy foods. Leaders have established effective working relationships with health services, which has supported regular reviews of children's medication. As a result, changes to medication, including some reductions, have improved children's emotional well-being.

Staff provide nurturing care that promotes children's dignity. They support children discreetly and sensitively with their personal care and hygiene needs. Staff are attentive to children's presentation and help them to have their hair cared for and styled. Staff also support children to develop their independence skills. They understand the targets children are working towards and help them to make progress and build their skills over time.

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

There are restrictions in place in some areas of the home, which are often necessary to keep children safe. However, the ongoing need for some restrictions has not been reviewed. For example, a utility room is locked, which restricts children's access to snacks, and a shared bathroom is also locked. Staff and leaders are not sufficiently proactive or aspirational in reviewing and reducing restrictions where it is safe and appropriate to do so.

One child is monitored using a video camera when they are alone in their bedroom due to concerns about self-harm. However, this measure has not been adequately reviewed. Although an assessment by the therapy team was identified as a required action as part of a previous review, this has not been completed several months later. As a result, the ongoing use of this monitoring risks unnecessarily impinging on the child's privacy. In addition, children's plans do not clearly explain the purpose of the monitoring or how it remains proportionate to the identified risk.

Due to children's needs and vulnerabilities, there are high levels of staff monitoring and supervision in place. However, there have been occasions when staff have not supervised children in line with their plans. This has, at times, led to concerns and incidents for children. For example, on one occasion a child accessed another child's bedroom during the night, which was unsettling for the child affected.

On one occasion, a child sustained a bruise, and ineffective communication between the school and home staff meant that the cause was not sufficiently explored. There is no effective, joined-up approach to managing safeguarding concerns for children across the site. This is compounded by fractured relationships between senior leaders in each setting.

Fire safety measures are not effective. There was an unsafe fire drill where staff did not respond in line with expectations. Managers did not address this promptly. As a result, children could be at risk of harm in the event of a fire during the night. In addition, staff have not taken a creative or proactive approach to helping children learn about fire safety.

Children's medication is managed safely overall. Medication is disposed of appropriately; however, records do not clearly show which items and quantities are returned to the pharmacy. Managers are aware of this shortfall. Medication errors have reduced and are taken seriously by managers, who take prompt action to address concerns and reduce the risk of reoccurrence.

Staff understand the importance of maintaining children's routines and use a range of resources to help children understand what to expect. When there are changes, or important information to share, staff use social stories to explain these to children. This helps children to understand changes such as appointments and reduces their anxiety.

Since the last inspection, the number of occasions when staff use physical intervention has reduced. Managers say that they want to continue to reduce the use of physical intervention further. Staff receive appropriate training, and only staff who are trained use physical intervention.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Relationships between leaders of the home and the on-site school are poor. This significantly impedes effective communication and joint decision-making. This behaviour sets a poor example to staff in both settings and negatively affects staff morale. Although the responsible individual has attempted to address these issues, action has been too slow and lacks impact. As a result, leadership conflict remains unresolved and continues to undermine effective leadership and management across the site

There has been inappropriate sharing of confidential information about the home with external parties by multiple members of staff. Leaders have not been able to identify who is responsible for these breaches or prevent them from continuing. This represents a serious failure in information governance and raises significant concerns about the culture within the organisation. Leaders have not ensured that staff understand or adhere to expectations around confidentiality, which undermines trust and demonstrates a lack of integrity in practice.

Managers investigate formal complaints and treat them seriously. However, there is a pattern of informal complaints not being resolved effectively, leaving parents dissatisfied. Leaders have failed to ensure that concerns are addressed promptly and transparently at an early stage. As a result, complaints escalate unnecessarily and can take a prolonged period to resolve fully. This lack of effective oversight and timely resolution undermines parents' confidence in the leadership of the home.

Staff and managers do not receive supervision with sufficient frequency or consistency. For example, the registered manager has received only one formal supervision in the past six months. Leaders have failed to ensure that effective supervision arrangements are in place. As a result, staff support, professional development and well-being are not prioritised, which weakens oversight of practice and contributes to inconsistent standards of care.

Staff have made some progress in completing their qualifications, and the proportion of qualified staff has increased. However, several staff are still not qualified within required regulatory timescales. Managers have taken action to address this, and completion dates are imminent for these staff.

Children benefit from a core staff team who know them well and have developed trusted relationships. Staff understand children's individual needs and preferences. Communication passports are in place for each child, which help new or less familiar staff to understand how best to care for them. External staff also receive an introduction to the home.

There continues to be a high number of staff vacancies. However, there is on-going recruitment, and the appointment of an individual to oversee this on a full-time basis has enhanced recruitment activity vastly. Staff receive training in a breadth of topics, and they complete specialist training that enables them to meet the needs of children.

Leadership and management oversight at the home is inconsistent and ineffective. Although the responsible individual is aware of the seriousness of the shortfalls, they have not taken sufficiently decisive or timely action to address them. Capacity issues limit the responsible individual's ability to provide effective challenge and oversight. While external support is being sought, this has not yet resulted in improvement.

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 work as a team where appropriate; 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. 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)(b)(f)(h)) This specifically relates to managers ensuring that the homes ethos and culture is in accordance with the homes statement of purpose. This includes taking action to ensure that all staff adhere to confidentiality and report any concerns in an appropriate way. Furthermore, this includes senior leaders working collaboratively to meet children's needs.	1 August 2026

This also relates to leaders and managers having effective oversight and taking prompt action to address any shortfalls and concerns. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	
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; 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)(v)(vi)) This specifically relates to managers ensuring that staff consistently supervise children in line with their plans. This also relates to managers ensuring that there are effective joint working arrangements across the whole site to safeguard children, and that safeguarding concerns are managed collaboratively. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	1 August 2026
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans; seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs; seek to develop and maintain effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered	1 August 2026

person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children's home is to provide care and accommodation. (Regulation 5 (a)(b)(d)) This specifically relates to managers ensuring that there is timely communication, and information sharing with parents and professionals involved in children's lives and care planning.	
After consultation with the fire and rescue authority, the registered person must— make arrangements for persons working at the home to receive suitable training in fire prevention; and ensure, by means of fire drills and practices at suitable intervals, that persons working at the home and, so far as reasonably practicable, children are aware of the procedure to be followed in case of fire. (Regulation 25 (1)(c)(d)) This specifically relates to managers ensuring that any shortfalls arising from fire drills are promptly addressed. This includes managers ensuring that all staff are competent to respond in the event of a fire. This also relates to ensuring that managers and staff are creative in their approach to helping children learn about fire safety.	1 August 2026
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; the child's placing authority consents in writing to the monitoring or surveillance; so far as reasonably practicable in the light of the child's age and understanding, the child is informed in advance of the intention to do the monitoring or surveillance; and the monitoring or surveillance is no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child's need for privacy. (Regulation 24 (1)(a)(b)(c)(d)) This specifically relates to managers ensuring that any surveillance of children is regularly reviewed to ensure it	1 August 2026

remains necessary, and that it is the least intrusive measure. This also relates to ensuring that children's plans and written consent clearly set out the reason for the surveillance. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b)) This specifically relates to managers ensuring that all staff, including the leaders and managers have regular and good quality supervision.	1 August 2026

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children can access all shared areas of their home unless there are specific reasons why this would not meet a child's needs. Limits on privacy and access may only be put in place to safeguard each child in the home (regulation 21(c)(i)). Any decisions to limit a child's access to any area of the home and any modifications to the environment of the home, must only be made where this is intended to safeguard the child's welfare. All decisions should be informed by a rigorous assessment of that individual child's needs, be properly recorded and be kept under regular review. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10)
- The registered person should ensure that they make suitable arrangements to manage, administer and dispose of any medication. These are fundamentally the same sorts of arrangements as a good parent would make but are subject to additional safeguards. (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)
- The registered person should ensure that all staff in a care role, including external agency or bank staff, have the qualification in regulation 32(4) within the relevant timescale listed in regulation 32(5). ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.2)

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: SC020558

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: Overley Hall Limited

Registered provider address: Overley Hall School, Overley, Telford, Shropshire TF6 5HE

Responsible individual: Lynn Thompson

Registered manager: Rachael Sharpe

Inspectors

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Joanne Vyas, Regulatory Inspection Manager
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