

SC025695

Registered provider: St Christopher's Fellowship

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a national charity and provides care for up to eight children who experience social and emotional difficulties.

The home registered with Ofsted in July 2011. The registered manager post has been vacant since December 2021. The current manager is in the process of applying to register with Ofsted.

There were four children living at the home at the time of the inspection.

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 June 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

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

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 28 February 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/02/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
01/02/2022	Full	Good
13/05/2019	Full	Good
09/04/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff place children's well-being at the centre of their practice and ensure that they are meeting children's day-to-day needs. Staff's dedication and open approach means that children have opportunities to create positive relationships with staff. Not all children engage well with the support offered, however, staff continually try to connect with children.

Staff speak positively about children and know the children well. Staff have a good understanding of each child's personality, strengths and challenges. Staff ensure that children engage in activities that are important to them, such as horse riding and go-karting. Staff value children's input and regularly seek children's views through key-working sessions and weekly children's meetings. This results in children feeling listened to and valued.

The home feels welcoming and comfortable. One creative staff member has drawn caricature portraits of children who live in the home, and this personal touch gives the message that this is the children's home. Children are supported and encouraged to personalise their bedrooms. Consultation with children has led to plans for a communal area to be turned into a cinema room. The children's guide includes clear information about how children can make a complaint. However, the guide does not include contact details for the Children's Commissioner.

A psychological therapist provides support to both staff and children, also offering training on topics such as emotional well-being, bullying and resilience. Staff are reflective in their practice and demonstrate an understanding of children's past experiences and their individual needs.

Staff advocate for children's educational needs and are creative in their approaches to ensuring that children engage in education. For example, staff arranged for one child to sit their exams in the home when they were unable to attend their school. Staff work closely with education professionals, who commented positively about the efforts staff make to help children to engage in education. However, not all children attend school, even though they have a school place. Staff demonstrate resilience in continuing to try to engage children in education through informal learning opportunities. However, children would benefit from further informal learning opportunities provided by staff, to develop their confidence and increase their engagement in education.

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

Managers and staff work hard to keep children safe from harm. Staff talk to children about the risks posed to them, particularly when they are away from the home. One child spoken to said that they felt safe in the home and did not feel the need to lock their bedroom door at night.

Staff update safety plans for children regularly and when new risks are identified. This ensures that staff can respond effectively to reduce the likelihood of harm to children. Leaders and managers have worked hard to develop a robust initial risk assessment tool. This helps to ensure that the admission of new children to the home does not increase the risks to those children already living there.

Managers are proactive in contacting specialist agencies when information suggests that children may be vulnerable to criminal or sexual exploitation. Consequently, targeted services are identified early to support children to recognise signs of exploitation and provide a multi-agency approach to safeguarding children.

The incidence of children going missing from the home is high. Staff understand the protocols that need to be followed to safeguard children when they go missing from the home. However, missing-from-home records are not consistent in the level of detail provided. Managers have successfully negotiated later return home times for some children to help them make good decisions in returning to the home on time.

Managers understand the risks that children can pose to each other, themselves and others in the home. Staff undertake room searches when necessary, in consultation with children. However, the home's children's guide does not make it clear to children why room searches need to take place. In addition, in discussing police call-outs to the home, leaders and managers had differing interpretations of what would warrant a police call-out. This demonstrates that there is an inconsistent approach to the management of children's behaviour.

Managers have installed a door alarm system that alerts staff when children leave their bedrooms. However, this is not considered in children's individual risk assessments or referred to in the home's statement of purpose. Leaders and managers have agreed to regularly review this system to ensure that it continues to be the most appropriate method for supporting the safeguarding and well-being of those living and working in the home.

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

The new manager has not previously worked in children's residential care but brings a wealth of experience as a qualified social worker. The responsible individual has provided additional support and guidance to develop the management team and embed a clear culture and ethos for staff, which is in keeping with the home's statement of purpose. The manager and responsible individual describe this development as 'a work in progress'.

Leaders and managers acknowledge that the recruitment and retention of staff are a priority. This is particularly the case with deputy managers, to provide a stronger level of management oversight and support to staff. Nevertheless, shortfalls in management oversight and scrutiny were apparent at this inspection. The review of the quality of care report has not been sent to Ofsted as required. A previous

recommendation regarding staff appraisals has not been actioned. The log of staff supervisions indicates that there are gaps in the frequency of supervision, and managers could not explain the reason for the gaps.

Staff spoken to say that they feel supported by managers. Team meetings take place on a regular basis and are used to discuss day-to-day responsibilities, reflect on incidents and introduce new services for children or ways of working. One staff member said, 'Managers have always been supporting me towards developing and growing. They acknowledge your abilities and believe in your capacity. Having that confidence in you makes you feel good.'

Leaders and managers have worked with the responsible authority to develop an effective protocol for emergency admissions to the home. They recognise that these admissions and subsequent endings have contributed to a period of instability in the home. Consequently, leaders' and managers' responses to requests for emergency admissions now focus more effectively on the skills and abilities of the current staff team in meeting the child's needs and the impact on the children already living at the home. This process has contributed to a period of stability in the home more recently.

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; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child 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)(c)(f)) In particular, ensure that effective monitoring and evaluation of day-to-day practice and procedures are in place and shortfalls are addressed.	2 October 2023
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child.	2 October 2023

(Regulation 36 (1)(a) and Schedule (19)(20))

This relates specifically to ensuring that children's care plans and child looked after reviews completed by the responsible authority are available as part of children's records.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that when children living in the home are not participating in education, staff work closely with the placing authority and other agencies to develop and review strategies to support the child and enable the child to resume full-time education as soon as possible. Children should be supported to sustain or regain their confidence in education and be engaged in suitable structured activities. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 28, paragraph 5.15)
- The registered person should ensure that there are clear procedures and guidance about requesting police involvement to manage behaviour in the home. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 47, paragraph 9.40)
- The registered person should ensure that the agreement with the responsible authority for the use of alarms on children's bedroom doors and staff pagers to monitor children's movements is reviewed regularly. Agreement for this should support the safeguarding and well-being of individual children living in the home. The home's statement of purpose and children's individual risk assessments should reflect such an agreement. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 16, paragraph 3.16)
- The registered person should ensure that the children's guide is reviewed to include details of how to contact the Office of the Children's Commissioner. In addition, the registered person should ensure that information regarding room searches is clear for children to understand in the guide. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 24, paragraph 4.22)
- The registered person should ensure that the review of the quality of care report is sent to Ofsted. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 65, paragraph 15.3)
- The registered person should ensure that staff performance appraisals are completed within agreed timescales and consider the views of children and professionals who have worked with the staff member. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 61, paragraph 13.5)

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: SC025695

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: St Christopher's Fellowship

Registered provider address: 1 Putney High Street, Wandsworth, London SW15 1SZ

Responsible individual: Laverne Cole

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Colin Bent, Social Care Inspector
Julie Cresswell, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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