

SC030367

Registered provider: Cotswold Chine School

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This independent charitable school is also registered as a children's home. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for a maximum of 42 children. The accommodation for children is provided across eight houses located on or near to the school. At the time of the inspection, 32 children were living across seven of the homes. One home is currently empty.

The registered manager has recently resigned. A new manager has been appointed and has informed the inspector of their intention to apply for registration.

Children who live here all attend the same school that is operated by the same organisation. The inspectors only inspected the social care provision.

Inspection dates: 29 to 30 November 2022

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: 3 November 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/11/2021	Full	Good
21/01/2020	Full	Requires improvement to be good
19/02/2019	Full	Outstanding
21/02/2018	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

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

Most children say that they like living in this home, have made friends and enjoy a range of meaningful and fun activities. Overall, they feel that they have positive relationships with staff, and most could identify staff who they will go to if they have any worries or concerns. However, two children said that they are not always confident that care staff listen to their views.

Staff build positive relationships with children and support them to make progress. Staff are proud of children's achievements and told the inspectors how they had seen children develop their self-confidence, independence and social skills since living here.

Children regularly attend school and are supported by staff to achieve. Care staff support children to read in the houses and facilitate trips to the library. Care staff support the more direct work completed by the education and therapy teams to promote a positive focus on healthy relationships, consent, understanding personal boundaries and sexuality. Although this curriculum is provided to all children, a more targeted approach has happened with individual children following incidents or unhealthy interactions with their peers. This work is ongoing.

The quality of day-to-day experiences for some children are variable. Leaders have admitted some children to the home when their behavioural needs are not compatible with the staff's skills and the home's statement of purpose. This has resulted in those children having to move out because their needs could not be met.

Children are helped to personalise their bedrooms and communal areas, meaning that the majority of houses are homely and welcoming. In contrast, one house has tired décor and lacks some homely touches. In one home, a new kitchen is being installed and leaders say that further improvement work is planned. However, in another house, the larder is kept locked as staff say that otherwise, 'if all the snacks are put out, children would eat them'. This strategy is not creative and requires review.

The family liaison work is a strength of the service. Those involved understand the importance of working with the families to improve outcomes for children and their families. Several families spoke positively about this support and reported positively about being welcomed into their children's home to visit them. However, other families and some social workers raised concerns that they are not able to visit their children in their individual homes and are told this is because their visit may upset other children. Senior leaders were not aware of this inconsistency and have not helped managers and staff to identify ways to enable these important visits to take place and support all the children.

Children receive prompt, good-quality therapeutic support. The experienced therapy team works alongside care staff to help children to develop positive mental and physical health. Children's individual plans and risk assessments provide guidance for staff in supporting direct work with children, but the quality of these documents varies. Some lack clarity and are not as up to date as others. Records of all meaningful conversations held with children are not consistently documented. In addition, the language used in some children's records and in conversation is institutionalised and vague. Senior leaders told inspectors that they expect staff to use 'language that cares' and are providing staff with additional support on report writing.

Children enjoy a range of activities in the home and the local community. During the inspection, several children were celebrating the football world cup in the onsite café and preparing for the school pantomime. Many children regularly enjoy horse riding, youth club and spending time with the therapy dog. Mealtimes in the houses are very sociable occasions. Children and staff sit together discussing their day so far and planning for the rest of the day. Each house has their own cook, who prepares nutritious home-cooked meals, which the children enjoy.

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

When asked if they feel safe at this home, the response from children was mixed. Most children said that they do feel safe, while some said they do not.

Since the last inspection, there have been incidents of allegations by children of inappropriate touching from other children. Senior leaders have reviewed each of these incidents and worked with safeguarding agencies to find ways to protect children. In one case, it is not clear that these interventions prevented a further incident. Senior leaders identified the need for further training for staff in this area. Two senior staff attended external training and are currently cascading the training on healthy relationships to all staff. Senior leaders confirm that once this training is complete, they will implement a tool for assessing harmful sexual behaviour in children and young people. This has yet to be used in practice.

Safeguarding records are comprehensive and evidence the actions taken to protect children. However, information about 'lower-level' safeguarding concerns are stored separately from these central records, which could compromise the effective evaluation of such concerns. Information from safeguarding events and subsequent reviews is not shared with staff who carry out the day-to-day care of the children or with the lead practitioner in each house. This does not aid in the development of the staff's practice and could potentially compromise agreed actions.

Children are helped to manage their emotions and receive regular therapeutic support. Restraint is used in this home, although this has successfully decreased from previous years. Senior leaders undertake a monthly analysis of incidents, restraints, accidents, and therapeutic interventions. They look for trends and

patterns and identify ways to tackle them. Learning from this analysis is not shared with staff in the houses.

Leaders' monitoring of incident and restraint records has not identified a variance in quality or omissions of practice. For example, some records do not provide clarity regarding the necessity for the restraint, or specifically ask whether children had injuries, although the narrative text often records whether there are any, but this varies. In addition, the quality of meaningful conversation with children after a restraint is inconsistent. Staff do not always ask the child how they felt about being restrained.

The oversight and monitoring of children's online and mobile phone use is not consistently effective across the home. More work is needed to help children to stay safe online.

Since the previous inspection, there have been nine incidents when children went missing from home. These have been appropriately responded to by staff. However, return-home interviews by the placing authority are not consistently taking place. When they do take place, information from these discussions is not always shared with the service. Senior leaders are not effectively pursuing this deficit.

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

Senior leaders have a comprehensive understanding of the children's needs and the progress they make, and take action to improve the quality of care. Senior leaders took ownership of all management tasks during the COVID-19 pandemic and have yet to pass responsibility for these back to middle leaders. Consequently, there is now a gap between the information that senior leaders know from their monitoring and oversight and the learning that should be shared with leaders and staff directly in the homes. During this inspection, this deficit was apparent, with several care staff not knowing important information about children in their care.

The registered manager has recently resigned, and a new manager has been recruited. Senior leaders are considering ways to improve the accountability and oversight of the children's homes, and they shared their early plans with inspectors.

Agency staff are not used in this home. Senior leaders are proud of this and their work to recruit and retain staff. At times, this has led to additional work for permanent staff and leaders to cover any vacancies. Staffing levels in most of the homes are appropriate to meet the needs of the children. However, this is not consistently maintained as, during the inspection, better deployment was needed to prevent staff from having to take all children with them to administer one child's medication.

Individual houses are directly managed by a lead care practitioner, and supported by care practitioners, activity staff, therapy staff and a practice training supervisor. The new practice training supervisor role has been provided in recognition by senior

leaders of the need to provide direct coaching and mentoring to staff in the houses, helping them specifically to develop their approach with trauma-informed care.

Support for staff extends beyond that of usual supervision and training. Senior leaders are mindful of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the importance of staff retention. Since the last inspection, they have implemented a number of measures to make the job more attractive to staff. Staff also have opportunities for therapeutic supervision, which leaders say has been very useful. However, records of these sessions are not maintained on staff personnel files.

Notifications of significant events are not routinely being submitted to Ofsted without delay, as required.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background. (Regulation 6 (1) (2)(iv)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that all the child's plans are up to date and reflect all recent events. In addition, the registered person should ensure that approaches in each house are child centred and reduce institutionalised practice.	31 January 2023
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; 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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(ii)(v)(vi)(b))	31 January 2023

In particular, senior leaders should share information and lessons learned from their review and analysis of safeguarding events with staff who care for children. In addition, leaders should ensure that all safeguarding records are easily stored to aid monitoring and tracking. Staff should ensure that effective systems and practice are in place to effectively monitor children's mobile phone and internet use and help them to keep safe online.	
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— ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; and 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)(d)(g)(i)(ii)(h)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that information gathered and lessons learned from their review and analysis of the work undertaken with children is shared with the practice leaders and staff to improve practice.	31 January 2023
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home.	31 January 2023

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose. (Regulation 14 (1)(a) (2)(a))	
The registered person must ensure that suitable facilities are provided within the children's home for any child accommodated there to meet privately at any reasonable time with the child's parents, friends, relatives or any of the following persons— a social worker assigned to the child. (Regulation 22 (1)(c)) In particular, children's parents and social workers should be supported to visit the house where their child is living.	7 January 2023
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")—	31 January 2023

has spoken to the user about the measure; and 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 (3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)) In addition, the registered person should ensure that during debrief discussions with children staff ask the child how the child felt about being restrained.	
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; a child protection enquiry involving a child— is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(i)(ii)(d))	7 January 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person must ensure that when a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority provides an opportunity for the child to have an independent return-home interview. The homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting

arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)

- The registered person must ensure the home's records on each child do not contain institutionalised, vague or emotive language. Information should always be recorded in a way that is helpful to the child in understanding their care history. ('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: SC030367

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: Cotswold Chine School

Responsible individual: Jason Lukas

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Wendy Anderson, Social Care Inspector

Clare Nixon, Social Care Inspector

Martin Brown, Social Care Inspector

Katie Ratcliffe, Social Care Inspector

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