

SC030677

Registered provider: West Berkshire Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and run by the local authority. It provides short breaks to children and young people who have physical and/or learning disabilities. The home is registered to provide care for up to six children and young people.

There has been no registered manager since October 2018.

Inspection dates: 19 to 20 June 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **requires improvement to be 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 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: 4 December 2018

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
04/12/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good
27/02/2018	Full	Good
14/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
21/06/2016	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
In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. (Regulation 45 (2)(a)(b)(c))	31/08/2019
The registered person must maintain records ('case records') for each child which are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(b)(c))	31/08/2019
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— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(h))	31/08/2019

Inspection judgements

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

The absence of written documentation to support the referral and assessment process impacts on the overall care planning process. However, the process for considering whether the staff can meet children's individual and complex needs is well thought out. Managers obtain information from parents and teachers and spend time getting to know the child before making a final decision.

Staff work hard to support children. This includes helping them to be as independent as possible. Although there have been noted improvements in children's plans, these plans do not always state what areas the staff should focus on. In some cases, clearer guidance is needed for staff on how to support children in understanding their emerging sexual feelings. Similarly, clearer guidance is needed for staff on how they record children's achievements and progress.

Staff are committed to supporting children to have fun. Overnight stays are arranged to help encourage friendship groups. Evenings and weekends are well planned, and children are fully involved in choosing activities. Staff are also beginning to obtain children's views in a more structured way through meetings and feedback forms.

The home's decor and general appearance continue to look tired and neglected. Since the last inspection, leaders and managers have secured funding and put plans in place to address this. However, there are no clear timescales for these works to be undertaken. The aim is to have them completed later this year.

Some improvements have been made to the outside of the home. A new path enables children using wheelchairs to access a new shaded sensory play area. This means that children now have equal access to the garden. Staff spoken to during the inspection said that the children love playing outside and gain a lot of enjoyment from it.

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

The manager has created an environment where children are supported to take age-appropriate risks. As a result, the staff are less risk averse and are helping children to learn how to keep themselves safe. Recent topics have included the safe use of mobile phones. There are also fewer restrictions in place, particularly in relation to internal doors being locked and audio surveillance only being used where necessary.

As part of the overall development plan, the manager has prioritised safeguarding. All staff have received up-to-date training and know how to identify and report concerns. Extra funding has enabled the already high staffing levels to be increased, which means that there is another member of staff around to support busy times.

A new behaviour management policy reflects the manager's expectations of how children are supported. This includes helping children to manage their own behaviour. This positive approach has helped reduce incidents and lessen the need for any physical intervention.

A comprehensive fire risk assessment was undertaken in 2017. All the recommendations have now been actioned. These included some significant improvements to the safety of the building. Although there have been no further issues identified, the risk assessment has not been reviewed. This is a missed opportunity to maintain the current safety levels.

Recruitment practice is still not robust. Records do not evidence that all the necessary pre-employment checks have been carried out. Staff files are disorganised, and records are kept in various locations. Although managers know that new staff are suitable and fully vetted, the absence of some documents makes this difficult to check quickly.

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

The registered manager left the service in October 2018.

A new manager was appointed in November 2018. He has since applied to Ofsted to become the registered manager.

Senior leaders and managers continue to focus on a journey of improvement and are making steady progress in all areas. However, despite managers knowing where the weaknesses are, action plans have mainly concentrated on and addressed the requirements made at the last inspection in December 2018.

The processes for supporting staff in their roles are not being used effectively. New staff are not given the necessary induction to help them understand the job. Supervision meetings are not child focused and do not reflect the changes that the manager is making, particularly in relation to his expectations of them. Not all staff have an up-to-date appraisal and, where they do, annual targets are not evident.

The manager has worked hard to change and develop the culture in the home. This includes being very clear about the standards of care expected. His open and honest approach has improved staff morale, and staff said that the manager is very supportive and approachable. However, the absence of written records to support this progress makes it difficult to track.

The manager has good oversight and scrutiny of safeguarding concerns. Other monitoring arrangements are not sufficiently robust. Children's care planning is disjointed and does not consider the local authority's plan. Records are not always signed by managers, which in some cases has led to poor practice, particularly in relation to the language used to describe children's behaviour.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC030677

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Victoria Park Children's Centre, Newbury RG14 1EH

Responsible individual: Jane Seymour

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Amanda Harvey, social care inspector

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