

SC035339

Registered provider: Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority home provides care for up to four children who may have social or emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in April 2022.

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 May 2023

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: 28 June 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/06/2022	Full	Good
07/01/2020	Full	Inadequate
17/07/2019	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
21/11/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

Staff work hard to provide a positive environment for children to live in safely. Staff are nurturing and caring with the children. However, the progress that children make is variable.

Most children attend school regularly and make progress in their education. However, some children have not attended or had any formal or informal education for significant periods, which has negatively impacted on their learning. There has been insufficient escalation and challenge to support those children affected.

The health needs of children are generally well promoted, and children are registered with relevant health services. However, staff have not involved key specialist services when needed, such as a dietitian, to support one child to eat a more-healthy diet and encourage them to lead a healthier lifestyle.

Children generally have good relationships with the adults who support them. A child told inspectors that 'staff are nice people'. However, one child's views and feelings about moving on were not taken into consideration appropriately. This has damaged the child's trust and relationships with staff.

Children's bedrooms were found to be suitably furnished. However, children's bedrooms lack personalisation and some bedrooms require redecoration due to visible wall marks.

Staff support children to spend time with their friends and families. This ensures that children sustain their valued relationships with the people who are important to them.

Staff provide children with some opportunities to develop their interests and hobbies. However, some children told inspectors that their requests for specific activities are not routinely acted on.

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

Children live in a physically safe, secure and comfortable living environment, and health and safety matters are addressed effectively by staff.

Staff are responsive in their efforts to keep children safe, and there have been regular multi-agency meetings to discuss the management of risk. However, despite a well-planned multi-agency approach overall, the manager did not plan or review with other agencies when making a decision for one child to live temporarily in an attached annexe without access to the home.

Staff promote the safety of children and ensure that children's safety is at the centre of their practice. However, not all staff understand plans in place to assess and address risks to children. Some behaviour management plans are unclear, inaccurate, or contain contradictory information. Strategies devised for staff to manage incidents safely are not always clear or effective.

Staff are trained in behaviour management to help them to support children safely. The consequences used to address unacceptable behaviour are fair and proportionate.

Significant incidents are notified to the appropriate authorities to support children and protect them from harm. Staff are trained in child protection and know how to report allegations and protect children from abuse. There have not been any complaints or allegations since the last inspection.

Staff take appropriate action if children go missing from the home. Staff actively look for children and work closely with the police to secure children's safe return. Overall, staff have been successful in locating and returning children safely to the home.

Safer recruitment practices are adhered to. This ensures that adults who are employed to care for vulnerable children are recruited and vetted carefully.

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

The manager is experienced and has sufficient oversight of staff's practice and the progress and experiences of children. However, the manager's quality of care review was not submitted to Ofsted in line with regulatory timescales. The report is detailed but does not include any consideration of the views of children, staff, social workers or other stakeholders to enable them to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the home. Additionally, there are no actions set for improvement.

Independent monitoring activities do not consider the views of professionals to inform the independent person's opinion about the quality of care provided for children and the arrangements made to safeguard them and promote their well-being.

The manager ensures that staff are supported through regular team meetings and practice-related supervision. Staff confirm that they feel supported and valued by the leaders and managers of the home.

The care provided for children is generally of a good standard. However, staff's practice is sometimes too reactionary and not reflective enough following incidents occurring. Some practices have led to children feeling isolated or stigmatised.

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 children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who— develop positive relationships with them; engage with them; and take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child's best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare; help each child to express views, wishes and feelings; help each child to understand how the child's views, wishes and feelings have been taken into account and give the child reasons for decisions in relation to the child; regularly consult children, and seek their feedback, about the quality of the home's care. (Regulation 7 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))	31 May 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—	31 May 2023

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; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; 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)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)). This relates specifically to ensuring that any restrictions imposed on children are reviewed and assessed on a regular basis. This also relates specifically to ensuring that staff understand how to manage children's risk-taking behaviours and have clear strategies to help them to keep children safe.	
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months. 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.	31 July 2023

After completing a quality of care review, the registered person must produce a written report about the quality of care review and the actions which the registered person intends to take as a result of the quality of care review ("the quality of care review report").

The registered person must—

supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed; and

make a copy of the quality of care review report available on request to a placing authority, if the placing authority is not the parent of a child accommodated in the home.

The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff.
(Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c) (3) (4)(a)(b) (5))

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that they use escalation processes when children are not in education or need specific services to meet their specific health needs. Staff should act as champions for their children, expecting nothing less than a good parent would. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 28 paragraph 5.15)
- The registered person should seek to provide varied opportunities for children to develop themselves in accordance with their wishes and feelings. Staff should support children to try activities that are new for them, where appropriate. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 31 paragraph 6.4)
- The registered person should ensure that stakeholder feedback is regularly sought by the independent person to inform their professional opinion and judgement about the quality of children's care and the arrangements made to secure children's safety and well-being. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)

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: SC035339

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council, Civic Centre, West Street, Oldham OL1 1UT

Responsible individual: Nicholas Whitbread

Registered manager: Lisa Allison

Inspectors

Anthony Kyem, Social Care Inspector
Sally Griffiths, Social Care Inspector

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