

SC035339

Registered provider: Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a local authority. It provides care for up to four children who may have social or emotional difficulties.

At the time of the inspection, the home was providing care for four children.

The home does not currently have a registered manager.

Inspection date: 12 February 2024

Date of last inspection: 3 May 2023

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

The inspector has looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

This visit took place to consider specific concerns that were notified to Ofsted.

Since the last inspection, one child has moved into the home, and one child has moved out of the home. Staff are ambitious for children and support them to do well in their education. Staff support children to develop independence skills in line with their level of ability.

Staff nurture children's relationships with their family and friends. This supports children to develop their identity and maintain relationships that are important to them.

Children access a variety of activities and days out. This supports them to develop their confidence and pursue their own interests.

Staff understand the importance of building relationships with the children. Children's risks reduce because of the care that they receive. Staff complete direct work with children to enable them to understand their own risks. This helps children learn how to keep themselves safe.

Children's access to some areas of their home is restricted. Three children raised concerns with the inspector about a food cupboard being locked intermittently. The decision to lock this area of the home is not based on children's individual needs. The managers removed this lock during the inspection.

Staff practice is inconsistent, and as a result, children do not always experience stable care. For some children, this means that they do not understand the boundaries in the home. Managers have arranged for staff to access specific training to improve consistency. However, this has not yet taken place.

Children's views are understood; however, these are not always acted on. When staff do respond to children's views, this is not always managed sensitively. Children have made complaints that have not been acknowledged as complaints or responded to. This does not enable children to feel listened to or understand how their views have been acted on.

Since the last inspection, the registered manager is no longer working in the home. There are interim management arrangements in place. The registered manager completed a review of the quality of care. Feedback has been included from children, parents and professionals, which meets a requirement made at the previous inspection. Managers work closely with external professionals to ensure that children's needs are met.

Management oversight of the care provided to children is variable. As a result, managers do not have a full understanding of the home's strengths or areas for improvement. For example, management oversight of incidents does not always provide a clear assessment of staff practice or identify any learning. This means that shortfalls in staff practice are not always identified or acted on.

Two requirements made at the previous inspection under Regulation 7 and Regulation 12 have not been met and have been repeated.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/05/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
28/06/2022	Full	Good
07/01/2020	Full	Inadequate
17/07/2019	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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)) This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	1 April 2024
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.	1 April 2024

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; 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 behaviours and have clear strategies to help them to keep children safe. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	
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—	1 April 2024

ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;

ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to 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.
(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(e)(f))

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC035339

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council

Registered provider address: Oldham Council, Civic Centre, Oldham OL1 1UT

Responsible individual: Nicholas Whitbread

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Sally Griffiths, Social Care Inspector

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