

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 experience social or emotional difficulties.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since April 2022.

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 June 2022

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: 7 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection:

The home was issued with three compliance notices at the last inspection, under regulation 12, the help and protection standard, regulation 13, the leadership and management standard and regulation 14, the care planning standard. The local authority closed the home and a condition was imposed to notify Ofsted three months prior to the admission of a child.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/01/2020	Full	Inadequate
17/07/2019	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
21/11/2018	Full	Good
05/10/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The manager has clear pre-admission planning processes to consider whether the home is a suitable place for children to live together. Children meet with the staff and visit the home before moving in. Children will not move to the home on an emergency basis.

The home has been fully refurbished, and children's art is on display as part of the decorative touches. Children are consulted about the home.

Children's plans are generally clear about how the staff will support them to make positive progress. Plans provide the reader with a sense of the children's characters and personalities. However, some records are not fully updated to help to understand children's lived experiences and are not always signed by the author. Children are encouraged to review and comment on their plans.

A child said that living at the home was better than being in foster care and that, if she cannot live with her family, then she will stay living at the home. She said that the manager 'helps everyone'.

Children who move from other areas are enrolled at a new school as soon as possible. Education professionals say that the staff in the home communicate with them well.

The staff are trained and have a good understanding of how to respond to children's health needs. Some important information, such as children's immunisations, are not yet recorded on children's records. However, in some cases, there are difficulties in accessing this information.

The manager reviews whether she and the team can still meet children's needs if their needs change. She advocates for more specialist care if this is necessary. The staff are committed to providing continuity of care while alternative arrangements are made.

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

Risk management plans provide the staff team with clear guidance on how to respond to children's risks and keep them safe. Plans are updated to reflect children's changing needs and vulnerabilities.

The staff follow procedures if children go missing from home or school to ensure that they return safely as soon as possible. Return home interviews are requested to provide children with the opportunity to talk about why they go missing.

The staff are proactive in seeking medical support when children's emotional well-being deteriorates. Room searches are completed to remove objects that a child may use to harm themselves.

Direct work is used to help children to understand specific risks, such as using alcohol or smoking. Staff respond to any socially unacceptable comments and help children understand how to behave more appropriately.

The staff respond to children's cultural needs and sense of identity. Children are offered a range of activities in the local area and are supported to keep in touch with family and friends safely.

The assessment that considers risk relating to the location of the home includes details about local risks and concerns. The manager communicates with other agencies to review and manage any risks. The assessment does not always include mitigation to reduce risks, such as local busy roads. It does not consider the local offer, setting out the support available for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is a missed opportunity to access additional resources for children, but does not affect children currently living at the home.

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

Leaders moved a child into the home during the pandemic, due to limited placement options being readily available. The local authority worked hard to support the child and keep them safe. However, the home was operating outside of the conditions of registration. A requirement is made to address this breach in the conditions of registration. The local authority later submitted a variation in the conditions and this was endorsed in March 2022.

There is a new registered manager in post. She is experienced and committed to her role. The manager says that she receives support from the responsible individual and a service manager to ensure that children only move into the home if it is suitable to meet their needs.

Prior to her registration with Ofsted, the current manager recruited new staff members in accordance with safer recruitment practice. All staff worked at other local authority homes until the home reopened in April 2022. There are sufficient staff to care for the children. Current circumstances mean that consistent agency staff are used to provide waking night support. The rota does not currently include the full names of the staff.

Mandatory training is up to date for all staff. The team is trained to meet specific and individual needs of children. The staff who do not hold a relevant children's residential childcare qualification are enrolled on suitable training programmes.

The manager has a good understanding of the development needs of the new team. She takes swift action in response to shortfalls in practice, including by agency staff.

The manager uses regular team meetings to improve and embed practice. Supervision is reflective and identifies any further professional development needs for the staff.

The manager and staff work proactively with other agencies involved in children's care. The manager challenges partner agencies to ensure that they respond to children's safety and care appropriately.

The manager has effective monitoring systems in place that provide good oversight of children's progress and care practice in the home. External independent monitoring also supports the manager's understanding of practice to drive forward improvement.

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. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)) Specifically, that leaders and managers ensure that the home does not operate outside its statement of purpose.	26 August 2022
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; are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c)) In particular, that children's health and education plans are updated to understand children's journeys while living at the home. As far as is practicable, the plans should include details of children's immunisation status. They should include details about when a child moves to a new school. All documents should be signed by the author.	26 August 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all records that must be kept in the home include the relevant information, including full names of staff on the rota. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)
- The registered person should ensure that the review of the location of the home includes consideration of mitigation of risks such as main roads and opportunities for children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.1)

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: Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council

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

Responsible individual: Nicholas Whitbread

Registered manager: Lisa Allison

Inspector

Karen Willson, Social Care Inspector

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