

SC035518

Registered provider: Sea Shell Trust Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is provided by a charitable organisation that also has a school, college and adult residential accommodation on the same site. It is registered to care for up to 28 children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, learning disabilities and physical disabilities. The home consists of seven houses, with occupancy of no more than four children in each house. Two houses are designated for use by children who have short breaks.

A new registered manager is in post.

Inspection dates: 21 to 22 May 2018

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	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: 21 November 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/11/2017	Full	Good
24/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
27/09/2016	Full	Good
28/01/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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- use their understanding of the overall aims and objectives of the home to deliver care that meets children's needs. (Regulation 6(1)(b)) In particular, that the aims of children's education, health and care plans and local authority care plans are consistently addressed.	06/07/2018
The health and well-being standard is that- the health and well-being needs of children are met. (Regulation 10(1)(a)) In particular, that staff have sufficient information to respond promptly to children's changing health needs.	06/07/2018
The registered person to lead and deliver care that ensures staff work as a team. (Regulation 13(2)(b)) In particular, that staff communicate effectively through shift handover and regular, full staff meetings.	06/07/2018
Leaders and managers must ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13(2)(e)) In particular, that all staff understand and use children's communication systems and healthcare plans.	06/07/2018
Leaders and managers must ensure that they 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(2)(f)) In particular, the registered manager to ensure that children's care plans and workforce development plans are based on an analysis of the impact of the quality of care being provided.	06/07/2018
The registered person must provide a copy of the statement of purpose to HMCI. (Regulation 16(2))	06/07/2018

The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. (Regulation 23(1)) In particular, that the medicines policy is implemented so that children get the correct medicines and treatment at the correct time.	06/07/2018
The registered person must ensure that all employees receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33(4)(b)) This includes the registered manager.	06/07/2018

Recommendations

- Managers must ensure that staff support children to have fun and have opportunities to develop their skills and interests, by supporting them to try activities that are new for them. Staff should offer children a wide range of activities both inside and outside of the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 31, paragraphs 6.4 and 6.5)
- The registered person, in conjunction with any relevant person, should assess what would be safe, achievable and reasonable for each disabled child, in line with their relevant plans, and ensure that appropriate opportunities are available for them to participate in cultural and leisure activities in the community, relative to their stage of development. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 31, paragraph 6.10)

Inspection judgements

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

Children generally receive consistent care from staff who have the appropriate skills and knowledge to support their complex needs. Gaps in the rota are still covered by agency and bank staff, and this can cause shortfalls in the quality of care provided.

Two houses are designated to accommodate children who have short breaks. Some children who stay in them are there for much longer periods than usual short-break times. They do not have a bedroom for their sole use, but sleep in a room where there is a second bed that another child will use on a different night. This does not give them any sense of homeliness, permanence or ownership that helps them to develop a sense of self. The short-break's house leader, who is new to the role, has identified this as a concern and has requested that children's living arrangements are reviewed.

Inspectors saw staff offer children warm and protective care. They focus on children as individuals and encourage them to make choices and have fun. Children demonstrate real trust and affection for staff and enjoyment of their surroundings. Parents were delighted to tell inspectors that their child was very safe and happy, and that the home was the best place for their child. However, the records do not demonstrate how the care being provided helps children to make progress.

Many children living in the home have complex and at times life-threatening health needs. Because shifts begin as children return from school, staff have limited time to gather information about changing needs. This reduces the ability of staff to monitor children so that their good health is protected and promoted.

Not all staff demonstrate good knowledge of individual children's health and independence needs. Not all staff support children to use their communication systems and programmes. Children's plans do not consistently reflect the placing authority's plan or their education, health and care plan. For example, the manager reduced staffing levels for one child. Although the social worker was informed, there was no review of the care plan. The registered manager does not consistently evaluate care plans. This reduces the effectiveness of the strategies and programmes that are in place to support children's ongoing development.

Staff and families work together to create a programme of welcoming, introductory visits for children moving into the home. However, the plan is not formally reviewed, despite information being kept about how well the visits have gone. Instead, staff tweak the programmes in line with each family's wishes. This means that children who are being introduced to short breaks do not benefit from a clear plan that supports their progress.

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

Clear risk assessments provide guidance to staff on how to manage each child's identified risks. These are regularly reviewed to ensure that they are up to date. A suitably secure site and appropriate levels of staff mean that children enjoy a wide range of on-site activities, including safe use of the swimming pool. They use the internal roads to cycle or walk around with limited support. This improves their ability to be safe when they access local community areas.

A part-time behaviour management coordinator role is being trialled. Staff say that this has given them confidence to manage children's behaviour safely and well, because he reviews incident reports and trains staff in appropriate individual behaviour support strategies and techniques. The lack of an agreed job description for this role means that managers are unable to formally evaluate the effectiveness of the support being provided by the post-holder.

The registered manager is part of the centre's safeguarding team. Child protection concerns receive prompt attention and appropriate professionals oversee the matter. Any complaints are recorded, addressed and resolved. Further improvement has been made because the manager operates an efficient 'informal concerns' system. Parents and social workers value this, because it provides a prompt response to worries about individual children's plans or care. The system has led to improvements in staff training and knowledge about children's emergency and complex health needs. A new medicines administration policy is being trialled to assess whether it reduces incidents of children being given the wrong medication. It is early days, and the impact of these changes has not been evaluated.

While children have access to a wide range of activities on site, some have limited access to community-based activities. Risk assessments do not take account of children's capacity to develop new skills and tolerate new experiences, and their progress in these areas is not consistently monitored. This limits their growth and development towards independence.

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

The home generally operates in line with its statement of purpose. A copy of this has not been sent to Ofsted. Since the last inspection, there has been continuing instability and changes in staffing. This affects staff knowledge and understanding of the overall aims and objectives of the home. A new registered manager is in post. She has made a positive impact on improving communication between the residential and multidisciplinary staff team on site. Parents praise her for her accessible, responsible and collaborative style. This has improved the quality of personalised care that children receive. Systems that support effective residential management are still in their infancy, and they are not fully developed. This results in inconsistent and patchy progress being made. Important areas such as children's health, safety and welfare are being suitably addressed.

A number of actions to support improvement are in place. There is better support for staff to understand children's diverse communication styles. A behaviour management position has been created. House leaders have received training in mentoring to improve their staff supervision skills. House leaders meet regularly with the registered manager to discuss the quality of care provided. The structure of the independent visitor reports has been made clearer. A service review has been completed by the manager, who has submitted an improvement plan to the home's board for approval. This is yet to be agreed.

Despite these initiatives, there is limited evaluation of the impact of these actions on improving the home. The requirements imposed after the last inspection have not all been successfully addressed. Some are repeated. For example, staff supervision still requires improvement to both quality and frequency. The registered manager does not receive supervision from a suitably experienced person. There is continuing use of agency staff to cover staff shortages, while recruitment and retention remain a problem. The manager relies on records, parent concerns and house leader and independent visitor reports to assess the quality of care being provided, rather than her own oversight of direct work. This is a missed opportunity to reflect on what has worked well or not, and if any lessons can be learned to improve practice.

There is poor evaluation of the impact of direct care, for example whether or not children benefit from the activities that they enjoy or whether all staff fully understand and follow children's communication and health strategies. In the short-break houses, children's transition plans are not reviewed for effectiveness. This means that leaders are unable to understand the contribution of the residential setting to children's overall progress. It limits the effectiveness of how staff address children's individual developmental needs. It limits managers' understanding of the specific development needs of individual staff so that they can continually improve the quality of care that they provide. This impairs the potential for children to make good progress.

The responsible individual is retiring from his post. Succession plans are in place to ensure a smooth handover of his responsibilities.

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 difference 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: SC035518

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: Sea Shell Trust Limited

Responsible individual: Mark Geraghty

Registered manager: Lisa McCloskey

Inspectors

Denise Jolly, social care inspector

Michelle Bacon, social care inspector

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