

SC035954

Registered provider: Metropolitan Borough of Wirral

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This service provides short-term breaks for up to six children. The provider states in their statement of purpose that they provide care for children with who may have physical disabilities and/or complex learning disabilities. In addition, the home also provides accommodation on a permanent basis for up to three children. The local authority owns and manages the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in September 2021.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 October 2021

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: 8 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/01/2020	Full	Outstanding
18/12/2018	Full	Outstanding
01/11/2017	Full	Outstanding
01/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

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

Children are cared for by an experienced and consistent staff team who know them well. Many staff working at the home have been there for a number of years. They have been able to build meaningful relationships with children and their families. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of children's needs. The inspector observed warm relationships between children and staff.

Children are supported to spend time doing activities that they enjoy, such as going for walks or trips to the theatre or the cinema. At the time of the inspection, the home was decorated for Halloween and staff had made plans for children to go 'pumpkin picking' at a local farm. However, currently records do not always demonstrate how staff support children to have positive experiences. The deputy manager showed inspectors a new form that has been devised to capture this, however this has not yet been implemented.

Staff support children with their individual health needs. For example, when staff had concerns due to an increase in incidents with one child who is non-verbal, they ensured that appropriate medical advice was sought to explore the reasons for this change in behaviour. The child accessed medical treatment and now appears more settled, resulting in a reduction in incidents. Staff at the home support children's education. One child's social worker told the inspector that staff attend relevant meetings.

Staff at the home have built positive relationships with children's families. One parent said, 'I feel my child is safe here. The staff are great. They make me feel welcome.' The home has positive working relationships with children's social workers and other agencies. One child's social worker told inspectors that she had suggested improvements that staff could make. She said, 'I feel they listen and take my views on board.' However, the registered manager has not ensured that all required local authority documentation is included in children's individual education, health and care plans. Therefore, staff do not have all the information required to fully understand children's needs, including how to support them.

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

Children have individualised risk-management plans in place. However, these have not been updated with recent information and do not include all the strategies that staff should follow to minimise the risks to children. Furthermore, some of the information within risk-management plans is contradictory. As a result, staff do not always have the written information they need to ensure that they respond consistently to keep children safe. However, discussions with staff and observed practice show consistency from the staff team resulting in reduced risk to children.

The registered manager uses impact assessments to look at potential admissions, including when one child recently moved into the home. However, the impact risk assessment did not demonstrate that the registered manager had considered the needs of the children already living in the home and others who access the service.

Significant shortfalls were identified in relation to the safe recruitment of staff. Procedures for new staff working at the home are not sufficiently robust. The registered manager was unable to demonstrate that all recruitment checks had been completed prior to staff working at the home. This does not ensure that the integrity of all staff has been thoroughly checked in order to keep children safe.

The staff team works in partnership with other agencies to support children living in the home, including children accessing short breaks. Safeguarding concerns have been shared with relevant professionals, including the designated officer. Safeguarding practice is discussed in team meetings and during individual staff supervisions to ensure that staff understand how to respond to any emerging safeguarding concerns.

The registered manager has implemented a new system for the recording of incidents and physical interventions. This has improved the registered manager's ability to identify patterns and trends and to evaluate if interventions are proportionate and effective.

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

Management arrangements have changed since the last full inspection. A suitably qualified manager was registered in September 2021. Staff say they feel supported by the new registered manager and welcome the changes he is making to the home.

Not all monitoring and review systems in place are effective. The children's records are written in a child-friendly way. However, the quality of children's records is inconsistent. It is not always clear who has written the record or how frequently key documents should be reviewed. Although inspectors found audits have been undertaken on records, these audits have not highlighted these shortfalls.

There are gaps in staff training. Staff have not had training in communicating with children with complex needs. The registered manager told inspectors that this training has been requested but is not yet planned. Furthermore, a number of staff have not received training in working with children with autism spectrum disorder or the safe moving and handling of people. This means that the registered manager cannot be certain that the staff have the skills and knowledge to meet the needs of children living in the home, including children accessing short breaks in the home.

The registered manager's quality of care review does not evidence consultations with children, their families, or external agencies. It is not clear how they have contributed to the assessment of the care children receive and their progress and experiences. Internal monitoring has not been used to drive forward improvements in the home.

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 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— 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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that risk-management plans include all relevant information including the strategies staff use to manage and reduce risk.	25 November 2021
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— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of 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; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.	25 November 2021

(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(f)(h)) In particular, the registered person must ensure there are staff who are suitably trained to care for children and that effective monitoring systems are in place to ensure oversight of all aspects of the day-to-day running of the home is undertaken.	
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home; and In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that each child’s relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14 (1)(a) (2)(c)) The registered person must ensure that they have relevant local authority documentation for children in their care.	25 November 2021
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children’s safety. (Regulation 32 (1)) The registered person must ensure that relevant checks are undertaken prior to staff working in the home in order to ensure children’s safety.	25 November 2021
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)) The registered person must ensure children’s case records are kept up to date and signed by the author.	25 November 2021
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—	25 November 2021

the quality of care provided for children.

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) (5))

In particular, the registered person must review the quality of care in order to drive forward improvements in the home, including gaining feedback from stakeholders.

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: SC035954

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Metropolitan Borough of Wirral

Registered provider address: Metropolitan Borough of Wirral, Education Department, Hamilton Building, Conway Street, Birkenhead, Merseyside CH41 4FD

Responsible individual: Sonia Bennett

Registered manager: Michael Southern

Inspectors

Genevieve O'Reilly, Social Care Inspector
Judith Birchall, Social Care Inspector

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