

SC036584

Registered provider: Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a local authority. The home is registered to provide care for up to four children who may have emotional and behavioural needs.

There is currently no registered manager. A new manager has been appointed who is in the process of registering with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 May 2022

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: 15 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection:

The home was judged inadequate at the last full inspection, on 15 and 16 March 2022. As a result of the concerns identified, two compliance notices were issued, in relation to regulation 12, the protection of children standard, and regulation 13, the leadership and management standard. In addition, a notice restricting accommodation was issued.

A monitoring visit took place on 13 April 2022. This visit examined progress made in meeting the two compliance notices. The inspector found that the compliance notice under regulation 12 was met. However, not all steps in the compliance notice under regulation 13 had been met and this was therefore reissued. The notice restricting of accommodation remained in place. During this visit, the notices were met and the restriction was lifted.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/03/2022	Full	Inadequate
23/01/2020	Full	Good
20/11/2018	Full	Good
18/01/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

Despite improvements made since the last full inspection in March 2022, children's care requires improvement. At the time of this inspection, there were two children living at the home. One child moved out of the home in April 2022 to a placement that was more suited to meeting his needs. Staff managed this transition well.

Children's progress in education varies. There is a disparity in the support staff offer to the two children. One child has not been in education since March 2022. The manager has failed to fully explore why she is refusing to attend school and has not put in place strategies to support her to attend. In addition, there is no structured home learning for this child. As result, the child has missed out on significant learning opportunities. However, the other child has good school attendance and staff support home learning when she cannot go to school.

Children are not always encouraged to read or contribute to their care plans. This is a missed opportunity to help children inform how they are cared for. Staff carry out key-working sessions with children, however, these are not always linked to children's care plans and they do not always focus on important issues. As a result, children are not supported in key areas.

Staff do not reward all children for their achievements and positive behaviour. There is inconsistency in how the behaviour of the two children is responded to. One child is praised frequently, the other is not. This does not help children to learn to make positive choices or feel valued.

Staff are currently not ensuring that children have a healthy balanced diet. In addition, staff and children do not all eat together as a family. These shortfalls do not promote healthy eating or replicate a family environment.

One child told the inspector that she was happy living at the home, which was confirmed by her social worker. Both children have positive relationships with some staff members, who they can talk to if they have worries.

Children live in a welcoming, homely environment. The home is clean and tidy and children have personalised their bedrooms.

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

Children's risk assessments are not all up to date and do not always capture all known risks. In addition, they do not contain sufficient strategies for staff to follow. For example, there is no guidance to inform staff of what to do when a child self-

harms. As a result, staff interventions to reduce risks to children are not always successful.

Staff do not always follow processes put in place to protect children or implement boundaries effectively. For example, staff are not carrying out daily phone checks for one child and do not challenge the child when they do not allow staff to monitor their phone usage. In addition, staff have failed to follow the risk assessment for one child's smoking and this behaviour has gone without effective challenge. On inspection, it was observed that staff allow children into the staff office. These shortfalls in practice have the potential to compromise children's safety.

Leaders and managers do not implement safer recruitment processes. Managers do not verbally verify the reasons why a person has left previous roles working with children or vulnerable adults. This has the potential to leave children being cared for by adults who have not undergone the required checks.

The two children do not get along with one another. They compete for staff attention and lead very separate lives. Staff have failed to address this effectively and, as a result, children eat separately, do activities separately and do not speak to one another.

The home has experienced a more stable period since the last inspection and as a result there have been no physical interventions, incidents of children going missing from care or serious incidents. Staff help children to de-escalate and become calm, which avoids the need for staff to physically restrain children.

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

The previous registered manager resigned and left the home in March 2022, following the last full inspection. A new manager is in post who is in the process of registering with Ofsted. While some progress has been made since the last full inspection, the shortfalls identified at this inspection show that managers do not yet monitor all aspects of the home effectively. Four of the 10 requirements raised at the last inspection have not been met and are reissued. In addition, four further requirements have been raised following this inspection.

The manager has not ensured that children have structure and routine to their day. As a result, one child has spent long periods alone in her bedroom. Care plans to help support children with positive engagement and healthy relationships are not in place or are ineffective.

The manager's review of the quality of care has lacked feedback from staff and family members, and feedback from children was limited. The review lacked detailed analysis of incidents. This affects the review of the quality of care provided to children and hinders shortfalls from being identified and addressed.

While staff have regular conversations with children, the manager has not ensured that there are well-planned sessions to address children's behaviours. Failure to provide such sessions does not support children to learn to keep themselves safe and to progress.

There is a comprehensive range of training opportunities in place for staff, including essential courses such as safeguarding and medication management. In addition, staff have completed training in specialised areas such as child-attachment and life-story work. However, not all staff have completed all relevant training such as first aid, direct work with children and supporting children at risk of criminal exploitation. As a result, there are gaps in their knowledge. The manager is aware of this and has put in place a plan to rectify this shortfall.

Staff have not received an annual appraisal. This means that staff practice and performance has not been formally reviewed. However, staff told the inspector that they feel supported in their roles and have access to regular supervision. In addition, regular team meetings and reflective practice sessions provide a forum for staff and managers to discuss and plan for children. This support helps staff to be better equipped to meet children's needs.

Managers were aware of most of the shortfalls identified, however, they had not yet had time to make the necessary changes to further improve the quality of care provided to children.

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 education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans; support each child's learning and development, including helping the child to develop independent study skills and, where appropriate, helping the child to complete independent study; understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers; help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment; promote opportunities for each child to learn informally; help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible; help each child to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child's relevant plans; and that each child has access to appropriate equipment, facilities and resources to support the child's learning. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(viii)(x))	18 July 2022

This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that all children are in education. This also relates to ensuring that the children are supported with home learning with structured routines in the home.	
The health and well-being standard is that— the health and well-being needs of children are met; children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being; and children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff help each child to— achieve the health and well-being outcomes that are recorded in the child’s relevant plans; understand the child’s health and well-being needs and the options that are available in relation to the child’s health and well-being, in a way that is appropriate to the child’s age and understanding; understand and develop skills to promote the child’s well-being. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iv)) This specially relates to the registered person ensuring that staff actively discourage children from smoking and support them not to smoke.	18 July 2022
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff—	18 July 2022

meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans; encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding; understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children; that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(ix)(b)) The registered person must ensure that staff have an understanding of children's past traumatic experiences and any additional needs they may have. In addition, that this understanding is used to support children with their behaviour in a nurturing way. This also relates to ensuring that staff support children to build positive relationships with one another.	
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; help each child to understand how to keep safe. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)) This relates to the registered person ensuring that risk assessments are up to date, accurate and contain effective strategies for staff to support children, and that staff follow these risk assessments.	18 July 2022

The registered person should ensure that staff complete direct work with children to help them understand their own behaviours.	
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. ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)) The specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that staff complete training for their roles.	18 July 2022
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only; employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that; the individual is of integrity and good character; the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform; the individual is mentally and physically fit for the purposes of the work that the individual is to perform; and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(a)(b)(c)(d)) This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that verification is sought of reasons for staff leaving all	18 July 2022

previous employment where they have worked with children or vulnerable adults. In addition, that full employment history dates are obtained and verified as part of recruitment checks.	
The registered person must ensure that all employees— have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(c)) The registered person should ensure that all staff receive an annual appraisal.	18 July 2022
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. 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"). (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c) (3)) The registered person should ensure that the review of the quality of care report includes the views of all relevant individuals. In addition, a robust action plan should be put in place to address any areas for improvement.	18 July 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children are provided with nutritious meals suitable for each child's needs. Where appropriate, children should be involved in choosing and preparing meals and opportunities to sit together and eat should be promoted. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.8)
- The registered person should ensure that staff reinforce, praise and encourage positive behaviour and keep a record of this for all children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.11)
- The registered person should ensure that children are encouraged by staff to see the home's records as living documents, supporting them to view and contribute to the record in a way that reflects their voice on a regular basis. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 58, paragraph 11.19)

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: SC036584

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

Registered provider address: Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, Civic Centre, Darwall Street, Walsall WS1 1TP

Responsible individual: Jivan Sembi

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Debbie Holder, Social Care Inspector

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