

SC038435

Sunfield Children's Homes Limited

Monitoring visit

Information about this children's home

This service is a children's home registered with Ofsted. It is also a residential special school registered with the Department for Education. Since May 2017, it has become a subsidiary of the Ruskin Mill Trust. The home is registered to accommodate 61 children who have severe and/or complex learning difficulties and/or behavioural needs, including seven placements for children who require short breaks. There are 12 houses within the grounds of the school. At the time of this visit, seven homes were open and were accommodating 17 children full time and two children for short breaks.

Inspection date: 4 and 5 September 2017

This monitoring visit

On 12 and 13 June 2017, Ofsted completed an unannounced full inspection. Inspectors found widespread concerns and Ofsted judged this home inadequate. The concerns included:

- Staff and managers had failed to promote children's safety and well-being.
- Staff were not following children's behaviour plans or supervising children in line with their individual care plans.
- Staff were using restrictive measures to manage children's behaviour.
- There was a lack of managerial oversight in safeguarding and in the use of control measures.
- There was a lack of consistent and qualified staff.
- Managers were not following safe recruitment principles when using agency staff.
- Managers were not ensuring that staff followed fire regulations.

On 8 August 2017, Ofsted completed a monitoring visit. Inspectors found that although some shortfalls remained, managers and staff were making improvements.

On 4 and 5 September 2017, Ofsted completed a monitoring visit after receiving:

- Two formal notifications from the service's managers that have resulted in staff being suspended, pending the outcome of safeguarding investigations.
- Two anonymous concerns about low staff morale, a lack of experienced staff on shift, parent's complaints not being listened to, a high use of agency staff, children's leisure plans not being met, staff not receiving supervision and children being moved on from the service.

There have been no new children admitted to the home. One child has moved out since the last monitoring visit. Notice has been served on one other child's placement. The new senior management team members are clear on their duties to safeguard staff and to ensure they accommodate children whose needs they can safely meet. Consequently, they are promoting the well-being and safety of children.

Staff morale is gradually improving, although change and restructuring are still ongoing. Staff and manager redundancies have taken place. Some staff have also resigned. Most have now left, but some staff are still working their notice periods. A recruitment drive is now underway and the first 12 new staff have been appointed. Over the summer, the use of agency staff and the fact that managers and staff worked additional hours meant that shifts were covered. The use of agency staff has increased, but managers use the same agency staff where possible. The number of staff working in each house, compared to this time last year, has also slightly increased.

Over the summer holiday, children have mainly enjoyed their prearranged activities. When activities have not taken place due to staff shortages, or a child being unsettled, they have been rescheduled.

The overall numbers of incidents, accidents and physical interventions have also significantly decreased since March 2017. Where there are still high numbers of incidents linked to individual children, the senior management team has good oversight. In two cases, notice has been given on children's placements because the senior management team no longer feels the service is able to safely meet their needs.

Some redundancies have included the home's managers. This has made staff feel less supported, and has possibly compromised some lines of communication. From 1 September 2017, all houses have appointed house managers in post. As part of their role they will be supervising staff and monitoring the number of hours they work.

When there have been incidents or safeguarding concerns, appropriate referrals and notifications have been made. These have resulted in immediate actions being taken to keep children safe. Moving forward, the new senior management team is reviewing practice and exploring the additional support it can give to staff and children to raise standards.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/06/2017	Full	Inadequate
22/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
11/05/2016	Full	Requires improvement
04/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to ensure progress being made by the children's home is ongoing since its last Ofsted monitoring visit.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC038435

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: Sunfield Children's Homes Limited

Registered provider address: Clent Grove, Clent, Stourbridge, Worcestershire
DY9 9PB

Responsible individual: Caroline Bell

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Dawn Bennett, social care lead inspector

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