

SC038435

Registered provider: Sunfield Children's Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is part of a residential special school. Since May 2017, it has been a subsidiary of the Ruskin Mill Trust.

The registered manager holds a BA Hons degree in social welfare and is qualified to level 4 in leadership and management. She was registered with Ofsted in April 2018.

The home is registered to accommodate up to 61 children with severe and complex learning difficulties and behavioural needs, including seven placements for children who require short breaks. There are nine houses within the grounds of the school. At the time of the inspection, 22 children living in eight houses. The ninth home has been closed for refurbishment and is due to reopen soon.

Registered and approved by the Department for Education (Reg No. 885/6024), registered with Ofsted as a Children's Home (Unique Ref. SC038435), and registered as a Charity in the United Kingdom (No. 527552).

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 July 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: 12 May 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/05/2021	Full	Good
09/10/2019	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
19/06/2019	Full	Good
26/09/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff know the children well and support children to make progress and learn new skills. Staff listen to the children and celebrate their successes. Photographs of achievements and key events are discussed and put into books to record achievements and special events. This ensures that the children have a record of these important memories.

Managers and staff ensure that the children's health needs are met. Children enjoy walking to the community shop run by the organisation, to shop for produce grown in the home's grounds. As a result, the children are learning to lead healthy lifestyles that promote their long-term good health. Managers continue to raise standards and develop key health areas through the home's development plan. For example, all homes now have a dedicated well-being room that promotes the safe storage and administration of medication.

Staff plan activities and events with the children's involvement. For example, the staff and children from each house take it in turns to plan and run a weekly event for everyone to attend. Once a theme has been decided on, the children are involved in making and delivering invitations and setting up the activity. These events have been well received and have included a friendship disco for Valentine's Day and a canapé and mocktail party. The events have allowed children to experience new social situations and make new friendships in a safe environment.

Staff support the children to go out in the local community. Children enjoy going to local parks, cafés, restaurants and shopping. Some children attend specific weekly activities. One child goes to a weekly skiing lesson and other children attend youth clubs. Staff also organise special events in the community. For example, some children recently attended a birthday party at a local lido. One child has not been going out into the local community on a regular basis. Managers are aware of his specific needs and are liaising with the local authority to increase staff support. Although he is going to activities within the home's community, he is not yet experiencing regular activities in his wider community.

Staff help the children develop skills that promote their independence. For example, one child now walks back from school on his own. Other children are learning to use money and their bank cards when out shopping. This helps prepare the children for adulthood and moving on into their next home.

The homes are all well-furnished and decorated. They are welcoming and well maintained. The staff and children have worked hard to personalise them with photos and the children's arts and crafts. The grounds provide spaces for play, reflection and exploration. Children enjoy the outdoor play equipment, swinging in

the hammock and storytelling in the yurt. Children have the space and freedom to relax and express themselves in a safe environment.

Staff use key-work sessions to talk with children about a range of topics, such as what meals they want to prepare each week and what activities they would like to do. This allows children to play an active role in making decisions about their day-to-day lives.

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

Staff are successful at building positive and meaningful relationships with the children. These relationships help staff to promote the children's safety and emotional well-being. Staff are effective at managing children's behaviours. As a result, over the last 12 months there have been no missing-from-care incidents and the number of physical interventions has continued to reduce.

Feedback from external professionals and the local authority designated officer is positive. They spoke of good working relationships and said that the registered manager and staff have a good understanding of the needs and experiences of the children.

Managers and staff have a good understanding of the child protection and whistle-blowing procedures. Staff report concerns and poor staff practice through a range of internal and external channels. When a shortfall in practice by staff is identified, the registered manager and designated safeguarding leads liaise closely with all relevant external professionals and share information appropriately. Managers use learning from safeguarding concerns to review practice and put in place new strategies. These actions are taken to ensure that the safety of the child is given priority.

Staff provide safe environments in which the children can explore and grow. Children are supported to take risks that consider their individual circumstances and understanding. Management oversight of risk assessments and staff's adherence to the strategies contained in these risk assessments are good. In one example, a risk assessment has not been updated to reflect all known risks or the current agreed strategies to protect this child. Although this recording shortfall has not compromised the child's safety it has contributed to staff being inconsistent in how they care for this child.

Managers understand and follow safer recruitment procedures for permanent staff. When agency staff are used in the home, managers use well-established links with agencies to identify suitable agency staff to work in the home. The agencies' recruitment checks of these staff has been requested. However, the management systems in place to ensure that all checks have been received are not being systematically used.

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

Managers continue to develop the service. For example, the staffing structure has been developed to create assistant manager posts in all the homes. This provides staff with more opportunities for internal progression and promotes the retention of staff. Some staff are completing masters level training funded by the organisation. A training house has just opened onsite, and this will enable staff to undertake training specific to the organisation's ethos and approach.

Staffing numbers across the houses are below what is assessed to be required to meet the needs of the children. Because of this, managers have twice-weekly rota meetings to review staffing across the house. In addition, there is enhanced day-to-day management oversight to prioritise the use of staff and to plan how best to meet the needs of children. Managers have worked hard to ensure that the lack of permanent staff has not had a detrimental impact on the safety or welfare of the children.

In response to the staffing vacancies issue, managers have made the decision that no further children will move in. Furthermore, there are imminent plans for a small number of older children to move into their adult placements. This will alleviate the pressure on the current staffing resource. New staff have been recruited to fill the existing vacancies and these staff will start to work in the home once safer recruitment checks have been concluded. This means that there will soon be enough permanent staff to care for the children living in the home.

The focus by managers on dealing with staff vacancies has meant that in some instances managers have not been consistent in completing their own management tasks. For example, there have been occasions when notifiable incidents have not been shared with Ofsted. In other examples, management oversight of physical intervention has not been as thorough as expected. These shortfalls have not had a detrimental impact on children's safety or welfare.

Some staff have not maintained their mandatory training and other staff have not attended training specific to the needs of the children they care for. As a result, some staff are not being supported to ensure that they have the continuing skills to meet the needs of children. Records of training undertaken by agency staff with their agency are not being maintained and therefore it is not possible to see if they have up-to-date training. Managers have also identified that agency staff do not undertake the same induction and training as permanent staff. Plans are now in place starting next month for all agency staff to complete the organisation's mandatory training.

Managers have not ensured that they have received all relevant local authority documents, to inform their care of children. Although managers have made attempts to obtain these missing documents, they have not sufficiently escalated this issue to the relevant local authorities.

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 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; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(d)(h)) This specifically relates to ensuring that all permanent and agency staff have completed mandatory training and training specific to the needs of the children they support. There are enough staff working on each shift to meet the assessed needs of the children. Managers have a clear overview of behaviour management records, staff training and agency vetting.	30 November 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	31 August 2022

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— 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)(d)) This specifically relates to ensuring that clear vetting checks are undertaken for all agency staff.	
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)) This specifically relates to children having clear and up-to-date risk assessments and if any actions are identified to reduce risk, they are acted upon.	31 August 2022
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to involve each child’s placing authority effectively in the child’s care, in accordance with the child’s relevant plans; seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child’s needs; and if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority’s or a relevant person’s performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child’s needs are met in accordance with the child’s relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (a)(b)(c))	30 September 2022

This specifically relates to the manager's following up where they have escalated concerns to local authorities that statutory documents are missing.	
--	--

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children are offered a wide range of activities both inside and outside of the home (where appropriate) and are encouraged to participate in those activities. Staff should support children to take part in school trips, out of school and other clubs, volunteering and leisure activities. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 31, paragraph 6.5)
- The registered person should ensure that Ofsted and other relevant persons are notified of any of the situations specified in regulation 40(4)(a)-(d), or if there is an incident relating to the protection, safeguarding or welfare of a child living in the home which the registered person considers to be serious. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.10)
- The registered person should ensure that records of restraint are kept and that the records should enable the registered person and staff to review the use of control, discipline and restraint to identify effective practice and respond promptly where any issues or trends of concern emerge. The review should provide the opportunity for amending practice to ensure it meets the needs of each child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)

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: SC038435

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: Sunfield Children's Homes Limited

Registered provider address: Ruskin Mill, Millbottom, Nailsworth, Stroud
Gloucestershire GL6 0LA

Responsible individual: Paul Sutcliffe

Registered manager: Sarah Marshall

Inspectors

Dawn Bennett, Social Care Inspector

Debbie Bond, Social Care Inspector

Sophie Hills, Social Care Inspector

Louise Battersby, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022