

SC040631

Registered provider: Surrey County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and run by the local authority. It provides care and accommodation for up to six children.

The home has been without a registered manager since July 2019.

Inspection dates: 28 to 29 November 2019

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: 19 July 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/07/2018	Full	Good
27/09/2017	Full	Good
16/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
21/09/2016	Full	Good

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 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 the premises used for the purposes of the home are located so that children are effectively safeguarded; that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(c)(d))	31/12/2019
The registered person must provide a copy of the statement of purpose to HMCI. The registered person must— keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16(2)(3)(a)(b))	31/12/2019
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. The registered person must— supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed (Regulation 45(1)(4)(a))	31/12/2019

Recommendations

- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. Children's homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms,

food hygiene etc.); however in doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

This specifically refers to ensuring that the home is not being used for external meetings.

Inspection judgements

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

Children make progress through the safe and consistent relationships they have with staff. The staff team is becoming much more stable and settled after a period of turbulence due to the change in the management team, who had been in post for well over a decade. As a result of the responsible individual providing the management support for the home, there has been a steep learning curve for some staff, with some resistance to the necessary changes required. The reduction in the number of children in the home to two has meant that those still in placement have had focused care and support during this time of change. Both children have made the most of these changes, and access to staff, and are happier and more settled in the home.

The changes in some processes and procedures in the home now result in children's views and well-being being central to all planning. Their views and ideas are genuinely listened to and both have been involved in the care council. Observations showed children seeking advice and guidance as well as having time and space to share their views on anything from politics to what they wanted for dinner.

Children are able to express themselves as individuals in a safe space, exploring their cultural identity, sexuality and impact of diagnosed conditions. The members of the staff team are not shying away from uncomfortable conversations and are reflective on how well they are supporting the children to care for themselves in the future. Children now have greater opportunities to develop useful life skills, such as cooking and attending medical appointments independently.

Close working relationships with the virtual school mean that children now have better access to education when they are struggling to attend school or college. Bespoke packages lead to children engaging in a variety of educational opportunities and the option to change college courses when they realise that it may not have been the right choice. Attendance in off-site education provides the opportunity for children to make friends, and develop their social skills.

Staff promote the benefits of a healthy lifestyle to children. Children do not smoke or use drugs or alcohol. Strong links with the local emotional well-being team and specialist nurse mean that children get the help and support that they need to manage their emotional and physical well-being. Medication is safely stored and administration processes are sound. Meals are home-made and include a range of choices, broadening

children's palates.

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

Staff have an excellent understanding of each child's vulnerabilities, and note any changes in behaviour or presentation. They talk confidently of their responsibility for child protection and safeguarding the children in their care. Concerns are shared with partner agencies swiftly, and children are protected in the process. A police investigation into an ongoing case has stalled, and the responsible individual and independent reviewing officer have both challenged the delays. Records of safeguarding responses have improved since the change in management.

Children name staff they can go to if they have any worries or concerns, and trust them to sort out any issues for them. Children know the risks in their day-to-day lives. They are confident in what to do if someone asks them to do something they do not want to, and know how to give and understand consent. A child who plays games online was clear on what he would do if someone started asking him questions that were not game-related.

The children currently living in the home do not have a history of going missing. Staff know what to do should this happen. A member of staff raised the point that if a child is missing, it can take up to 20 minutes to search the house and grounds. This is recognised as a concern by the responsible individual and acting home manager.

Staff have a strong understanding of behaviour as a form of communication. They pride themselves in understanding that children are acting in a particular manner for a reason, and endeavour to explore what the issue is. There has been limited use of physical intervention. Reflective spaces allow staff to consider how to do things differently, and the responsible individual actively challenges poor responses, including taking disciplinary action where necessary.

The parts of the home accessible to children are safe and well maintained. Upstairs, the house is split into three areas. In two areas, the bedrooms are cold, with wallpaper coming off due to damp. The rooms are oversized and potentially overwhelming to a child. The corridors are winding, with many blind spots, which has led to safeguarding concerns. The responsible individual and acting manager have closed off this area and are looking to decommission the bedrooms. The children have moved bedrooms to the third, purpose-built area. Their bedrooms are now warm, bright and a manageable size. The improvement in health and safety recording reduces the risk of other avoidable hazards.

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

The home has been without a registered manager since July 2019. The deputy manager has also left since the last inspection. The responsible individual has been providing management cover to the home. A home manager has been in post since November 2019 and is in the process of registering with Ofsted.

The last statement of purpose available to Ofsted is dated April 2017. There have been updates in between. The acting manager is currently in the process of revamping the statement of purpose to ensure that it better reflects the home's operation.

The responsible individual makes effective use of reports produced by the independent visitor. They have acknowledged that at times these lack evaluation or triangulation of information. The responsible individual has challenged the visitor regarding this. There has not been a manager's review of the service since May 2018. However, the responsible individual and home manager are producing regular plans of how to improve and develop the service.

The home is an older-style property, which can be mistaken for offices due to its location and car park. The responsible individual has resorted to putting a sign on the front door saying that it is a residential building. There are 13 potential bedrooms, making the house feel institutional. There has been significant improvement to the downstairs communal areas, which have been redecorated and reconfigured to provide a homelier environment, including a large dining table in the centre of the room, instead of two smaller tables against the wall, where children previously ate separately. The two sleep-in rooms were away from the children's bedrooms and were not in sight of the bedroom doors. The staff sleep-in rooms have been moved to the same corridor as the children's rooms, providing much better access to staff should children be upset or require their support over night.

Children complain that there are too many visitors to the home. It is noted that two rooms can be used by non-children's home staff for meetings. Users often knock on the children's home door for the key to the rooms. The rooms are on the local authority room booking system. This is not conducive to it being the children's home, and is a stark reminder that it is a local authority building. This also leads to people who are not local authority employees having access and knowledge of the home's location.

Children's plans are regularly reviewed by the seniors and management team. They are now aspirational and use child-friendly language. Plans include expectations for children rather than rules, with measurable goals and targets. Children know what is included in their plans, and are able to answer questions asked about the contents of their plans.

From November 2019 onwards, all staff will have regular supervisions. This area had been a significant concern prior to the acting manager coming into the service. Complacent and poor practice is being actively challenged, including the suspension of staff where deemed necessary. This has also led to better outcomes for children, such as a child now saying that she loves her bedroom, whereas it was felt previously by staff that she could not manage the change to a new room.

The responsible individual and acting manager are reviewing and overhauling records and systems, implementing new records where necessary and removing repetition. A shift-planning record is helping with staff doing more with the children and in the home, giving them prompts on essential daily tasks. Children's files are being streamlined and

rearranged to make sure that they are easier to use. The managers feel that the team is engaged in the need for change. They are clear that the staff were always good at 'doing' but their recording was lacking.

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 differences 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: SC040631

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Quadrant Court, 35 Guildford Road, Woking, Surrey GU22 7QQ

Responsible individual: Lisa Wade

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Jennie Christopher, social care inspector

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