

SC040642

Registered provider: Surrey County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority run home provides care for up to five children. The home's main purpose is to support children until they are ready to live independently.

The manager registered with Ofsted on 1 September 2021.

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 February 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	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	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 27 April 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/04/2021	Full	Outstanding
10/12/2019	Full	Outstanding
21/11/2018	Full	Good
05/12/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

At the time of this inspection, there were no children living at the home. In the last six months, three children moved in; a very unsettled period followed. The group dynamics became difficult, unmanageable and unsafe. The manager acted decisively. Two children moved out and one child remained at the home. This child experienced some stability and moved to a neighbouring home just before this inspection. This move was very well planned and was in the child's best interests.

Staff provide high levels of individual support and develop meaningful relationships with children. Two staff members have supported one child's move out by continuing to work with the child during and after the move. This provides a protective factor, helping the child's adjustment to a new home. This is not an exception; staff provide excellent support to children long after they leave the home. Staff stay in contact with children and celebrate their milestones and achievements as they grow into adulthood. Continuing to support children who have moved to independent living helps them to become more resilient.

The staff talk about children with genuine pride. They relish children's achievements and remain interested in and informed about their progress. The hallways and living areas of the home are decorated with photo galleries of children. These capture memories of holidays and traditional celebrations and reflect a wide range of memorable moments. Children refer to the photos as they recall memories. These photos help them to recognise their personal growth.

Children benefit from living in a spacious and well-furnished home that is decorated to reflect their choices. The communal living areas are comfortable and creatively coordinated. Children are encouraged to dine family-style, with staff at the table. The staff strive for high standards of cleanliness and maintenance. Children's bedrooms are spacious and furnished with modern, matching bedroom furniture. However, one child's bedroom had a residual smell of tobacco that is unhealthy and unpleasant. The room was being aired and a refurbishment is underway.

The staff arranged specific support for children in regard to smoking cessation, sexual health and emotional well-being. Although children did not fully engage with these services, staff were tenacious in their attempts to encourage this.

Children benefit from a wide range of outings and trips. The staff provide children with stimulating experiences and new opportunities. Children have enjoyed short breaks, visits to the theatre, trips to the coast and outdoor activities. Expectations are realistic for children who find mornings difficult. Staff purchase flexible tickets and bookings.

The children's educational progress has been limited. Several children were not in education for a lengthy period. The staff made every attempt to secure an education

provision for one child but without success. During one period, three children were at the home during the day without attending any education. This contributed to them having little structure and forming unhealthy relationships with one another.

Over the last 18 months, seven children have moved to the home and 10 children have moved out. Several children moved due to their age and successful progression towards independent living. However, when children move to the home, the impact of the combination of their behaviours is not fully considered. The assessment of two children who faced similar risks failed to consider how staff would reduce these risks. Referral information lacked specific detail and time frames. Therefore, children moved in who were not compatible with the other children and, as a result, have since experienced unplanned moves.

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

The staff record risk assessments of children's individual risks and activities. These include strategies that guide staff in managing children's risks. The staff provide consistent reminders that help children to feel safe and secure. Although children do not always adhere to the rules, the staff remain consistent. Repercussions are sensitively managed but clear. Children who damage items are encouraged to repair them and make amends. Staff use a warm parenting style that is firm, fair and kind. Children are given non-confrontational prompts and guidelines by skilled staff.

The fire risk assessment has been updated and the resulting actions have been carried out. When a child is observed to have associated fire risks, the staff arrange extra measures such as visits from the fire service and extra fire-retardant furnishings. This provides children with protection in the event of a fire.

Following a period of children being missing from the home daily and encouraging one another to leave, two children moved out. The children were subject to a number of local influences that encouraged them to leave the home without permission. Staff worked well with the police to reduce these, and action was taken against identified individuals outside the home. In the last few months, the number of missing-from-home incidents has significantly reduced. The staff are vigilant and responsive. They quickly follow children when they go missing from home and encourage them to return. Children are routinely offered return home interviews with someone independent of the home.

During a period when the group dynamics became increasingly unstable, the staff worked hard to maintain the equilibrium. During this time, the children made a number of allegations against the staff. These were referred to the local authority designated officer. However, there were significant delays in the referrals. This fails to ensure that a relevant independent professional guides the manager in actions and investigations.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is established, experienced and qualified for the role. She takes immense pride in the children, their successes and achievements. The manager is proud of the team's spirit and ethos. The staff are unanimous in their appreciation of the support from the management team.

The staff team is exceptionally well motivated and positive. Staff share common goals and an enthusiastic, creative approach. The management and staffing structures are well resourced. Staff are encouraged to develop their expertise and interests, and their professional development is fostered and supported. This has resulted in an accountable team that, despite challenges, has remained buoyant and optimistic.

The manager has realistic oversight of the care provided and is aware of the difficulties over the last year. These have been reviewed with learning outcomes. Complex decisions resulted in changes being made to ensure children's well-being and safety.

The independent person visits the home regularly and provides reports that the manager uses to make improvements. The internal managerial monitoring is systematic and organised. Despite this, the manager has failed to always notify Ofsted within a reasonable timeframe of serious events at the home. Two events were not notified. This meant that, in those cases, Ofsted could not monitor the incidents at the home effectively.

The staff all receive supervision at required intervals and, in some instances, supervision is reflective and challenging. This helps staff to develop their practice and reflect on mistakes. However, the records of other supervision meetings are poor and repetitive and lack any depth or reflective discussions.

The manager works well with a number of agencies such as the police and social workers. Feedback from social workers about the care provided is extremely complimentary.

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 staff— are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)) In particular, refer all allegations to the local authority designated officer within 24 hours of the allegation.	24 February 2023
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)) In particular, ensure that when a child moves into the home, the impact risk assessment fully considers the impact of children living together. Particularly, ensure that all the referral information is questioned and explored with rigour.	31 March 2023
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or person working there. (Regulation 40 (4)(b)(c)) In particular, ensure that all serious events are notified to Ofsted within a reasonable time frame.	24 February 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that there is a nurturing and supportive environment that meets the needs of children. In particular, address the residual tobacco odour in a child's bedroom. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that when commissioning a placement, the placing authority must establish how the home will support the children's educational needs. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 27, paragraph 5.7)
- The registered person should ensure that staff receive supervision of their practice, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. In particular, ensure that supervision records fully reflects this. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)

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: SC040642

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Surrey County Council

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

Responsible individual: Lisa Wade

Registered manager: Rebecca Hanifan

Inspector

Deirdra Keating, Social Care Inspector

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