

SC063683

Registered provider: Manchester City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a local authority, and is registered to provide care for up to six children with EBD (social and emotional difficulties).

The home operates as part of an integrated service which provides children and staff with access to a range of accommodation options, services and outreach support. This is reflected in the home's statement of purpose. At the time of the inspection, there were four children living in the home; three of them spoke to the inspector about their experiences of living in the home.

The current manager was registered by Ofsted on 15 March 2018.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 24 February 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on our website.

Inspection dates: 15 to 16 June 2021

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	outstanding

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 25 September 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/09/2019	Full	Good
14/08/2018	Full	Good
16/02/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
31/10/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children living in the home benefit from individualised care that is child-centred and nurturing. They are supported to build positive relationships with staff, who understand them and who have high aspirations for their futures.

The home is a welcoming environment for children, who are included in decisions about decor and furnishings. The home is decorated and furnished to a high standard throughout. Children's bedrooms are personalised to reflect their tastes and they are encouraged to develop a sense of belonging in the home.

In relation to individual starting points, most children make progress in all aspects of their social, emotional, behavioural and physical development. Professionals speak positively about the high levels of communication and consistently high standards of care provided by the team. They refer to staff going 'above and beyond' to meet the needs of the children in their care.

All children living in the home had previously experienced disruptions in their education. They are now supported to attend education regularly and are also helped to access college courses and specialist placements. Professionals note the changes they have seen in children's educational attainment since living in the home. One professional said: 'I only have positive things to say. The changes in [name of child] have been unbelievable. The staff are tenacious and determined and have been really creative in trying to overcome barriers to support her with her education. They really want the best for her.'

Children's views about their experiences living in the home are mixed. One child said: 'Staff listen and help me. We can talk about things and I feel safe here.' Some children do not like the boundaries that are in place to keep them safe and feel that staff should not be encouraging healthier lifestyles or safer choices. Children know how to complain and feel able to raise any concerns.

Staff are proactive in working with other agencies to reduce the number of incidents and keep children safe. They invest in relationships with families and will challenge the local authority if they believe a plan is not in a child's best interests. They have recently approached the local authority to review a child's plan to enable her to have safe contact with family members.

Children's moves into and out of the home are well managed. Two children have recently been supported to positively move on to foster placements and two children moved into the home. Children who have moved into the home benefit from detailed impact risk assessments and robust matching documents that reflect the needs of all children living in the home.

Children's physical and emotional health needs are well understood and supported. Children have access to routine and emergency medical treatment as required. They also benefit from access to specialist mental health services and are encouraged to engage with professionals from other services, such as child and adolescent mental health services, substance misuse agencies and leaving care services.

Staff provide high levels of supervision and talk to children about issues that are affecting them. Direct work sessions are tailored to their individual needs and focus on supporting them to make safer choices.

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

Professionals are confident that children are kept safe when living in the home. They recognise the challenges faced by the team in keeping children safe outside of the home but speak positively about the action taken to manage and reduce risks. One social worker said: 'I feel they do everything they can to keep [name of child] safe. They really go above and beyond to try and engage him.'

Staff understand children's challenging and complex behaviours. Contextual safeguarding concerns are well understood and appropriately responded to. Links with partner agencies are exceptionally strong and staff use these links to further strengthen their knowledge and improve practice in the home.

Risk and behaviour management plans are clear and robust. Plans provide sufficient detail about action for staff to follow and, as a result, safeguarding practices are consistent. The team understands children's vulnerabilities and is vigilant and responsive to risks inside and outside of the home.

Incidents are well managed and appropriately reported. However, decision-making around what is considered a serious incident is not always clear.

The number of incidents of children going missing from home is high. The team works consistently as part of the wider system to regularly review risk assessments and plans. Missing-from-home panel meetings are attended by the management team to explore preventative strategies and risk reduction. As a result of strategies suggested by the team, incidents of going missing from home and self-harm are reducing. Management oversight of incidents has improved since the monitoring visit on 24 February 2021.

Physical interventions are used as a last resort. However, there has been a recent increase in the number of physical interventions used and on occasion interventions have not been effective due to children's individual needs. This has led to emergency services being called to keep everyone safe. The severity of incidents is reducing, and records reflect that work has been undertaken with specialist services to provide the team with additional strategies to use when children are struggling to regulate their emotions and behaviours.

Complaints and allegations are dealt with appropriately in line with the organisation's policies and procedures. Records reflect clear outcomes, and any learning from incidents is shared across the team.

Staff work consistently and creatively to overcome barriers and support positive relationships between children and their families. For example, staff have recently supported children and their parents to go on holiday, providing them with the opportunity to have positive experiences together.

It is practice in the home for internal downstairs doors to be locked for safeguarding reasons and at night-times as a security measure. This restricts children's movement in and around the home and has not been thoroughly risk-assessed.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is managed by an experienced and suitably qualified manager. She is supported by an assistant manager and service manager. Together, they have strong oversight of the home and provide effective leadership and guidance to the team. They have consistently high expectations of staff and are passionate about achieving positive outcomes for children.

Morale is high and staff feel supported and valued. Staff benefit from regular, purposeful supervision and team meetings. They have access to mandatory and bespoke training and are suitably skilled and qualified to meet the diverse needs of the children living in the home.

The team has a can-do attitude to supporting children to fulfil their potential. Handovers are detailed and communication across the team is excellent, ensuring that all staff are kept informed and are able to work consistently with children.

Agency staff are regularly used to cover long-term vacancies and staff sickness. The manager has taken steps to maintain consistency by contracting agency staff to work at the home on a temporary basis. This has meant that children are cared for by people who know them well as the manager has developed a cohesive team where it is difficult to differentiate between agency and core staff.

When higher staffing ratios are required, staff from another part of the integrated service, who know the children, are used to support the team. This ensures that there are enough staff on shift to meet children's needs.

The manager uses effective internal and external monitoring systems to maintain close oversight of the home and to continuously develop the service. Records are comprehensively detailed and reflect children's individual needs, experiences and progress. Minor shortfalls identified during the inspection were swiftly addressed and did not have a direct impact on the care of children.

The home is visited as required by an independent person. They scrutinise the performance of the home but, due to their other roles within the authority, there is

potential for boundaries to become blurred. This is something the management team is taking action to address.

The requirement made at the monitoring visit has been met.

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, the 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 registered person must ensure that— children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any areas of the home's premises— is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home; is necessary and proportionate; is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and allows children as much freedom when balanced against the needs to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21 (b)(c)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)) This specifically relates to the registered person reviewing and risk-assessing the use of locks on internal communal doors.	6 August 2021

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that recordings are individualised, and that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person should ensure that the approach to judging whether an incident is sufficiently serious to make formal notifications is consistent and not based solely on the outcome of the incident. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 14.17)
- The registered person should ensure that the independent person appointed is able to make a rigorous and impartial judgement of the quality of the home's

care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.6)

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: SC063683

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Manchester City Council

Registered provider address: Town Hall Extension, Albert Square, Manchester
M60 2LA

Responsible individual: Sean McKendrick

Registered manager: Christine (Esther) Smith

Inspector

Caroline Bertram, Social Care Inspector

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