

SC064472

Registered provider: Willows (Devon) Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is part of a small organisation and is registered to provide care for up to three children. The provider states in its statement of purpose that care is provided for children with social, emotional, or behavioural difficulties.

The previous registered manager left the home in August 2020. An acting manager has been in post since then. The manager has submitted their application to register with Ofsted.

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 1 February 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 20 to 21 July 2021

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	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	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: 4 March 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: Good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/03/2020	Full	Good
24/10/2018	Full	Good
20/11/2017	Full	Good
20/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

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

Since the monitoring visit on 1 February 2021, two children who moved into the home in February 2021 and March 2021 have since left. Despite the efforts by the staff to support these children, both the children were for periods not engaging in meaningful learning and not wholly engaged in the structured activities that were offered. Both children presented with behaviours that challenged the staff team. Leaders and managers acknowledged that, in each case, they could not safeguard the child and the staff team. This resulted in each child having their placement ended.

Two children that have more recently moved into the home have done so in a planned way. The manager and staff team have taken appropriate steps to ensure that the children are consulted with and supported during their move. As a result, both children are settling and are in the early stages of forming positive relationships with the staff team.

The children are encouraged to attend the school that is on site. However, not all the children that have lived in the home since February 2021 have consistently attended the school, and for the two children that have since left the home, their education has been interrupted. The staff understand that some children who have been out of school for some time struggle with their attendance. In these instances, the staff create learning opportunities, for example taking responsibility for the animals, cooking and shopping.

The children are cared for by staff who are enthusiastic and committed to improving their outcomes. There have been a few changes to the staff team since the previous inspection, primarily due to the impact of the pandemic. However, this has not affected the consistency of care. Staff spoke of how a change in the internal processes and systems used in the home, the training provided, and the support they receive from the manager has ultimately led to improved morale and how this has positively impacted on how they support the children.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Staff respond well to the children when they are upset. They understand the children's needs and use well-written and clear risk assessments that support children's safety inside and outside of the home. However, despite this, staff have on different occasions been challenged by the behaviours of two children. For example, on one occasion two children left the home together during the early hours of the morning without the staff's knowledge and, as a result, were at risk.

Staff know how to respond when a child is missing from the home. Staff appropriately discouraged one child from leaving the home, and there is a clear protocol in place that is ratified by the local authority and local police to respond. However, despite these attempts, this child continued to go missing, leading to a risk of exploitation, cause damage to property and assault staff. Leaders and managers recognised that the home was unable to meet the needs of this child and so took decisive action and moved the child.

Records of incidents show the actions taken by staff to support the children. On each occasion, managers share the information appropriately with professionals and ensure that risk assessments are updated.

Staff and the manager undertake a range of training in safeguarding matters. They undertake online courses while waiting for facilitated courses. This ensures that they have some knowledge of safeguarding practice. Specific training for managing self-injurious behaviour is scheduled to take place.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Since the monitoring visit in February 2021, the manager and members of the senior leadership team have continued to demonstrate a commitment and desire to improve the outcomes of the children and the support that staff receive. They have revised their recording and reporting systems and have stabilised the staff team. All staff spoke extremely positively about the manager, for example the positive effect the manager has on the day-to-day running of the home, and the support she has given them. A social worker responsible for a child that has recently moved in said that they were 'impressed' with the level of communication at the planning stage.

External monitoring is good. The independent visitor attends monthly. They provide an account of progress and identify any shortfalls in the home. The manager acts to address any concerns raised.

Leaders and managers have continued to complete regular reviews of all practice and procedures. An action plan is revised and kept up to date. Since the last inspection, the referral process has improved which means that the staff are better informed when considering if they can meet the needs of a child. However, the inspector found that, on one occasion, the manager had not considered the impact of inviting a child to visit the home without making sufficient enquiries. Despite this shortfall, the inspector found sufficient progress has been made to confirm that the requirements made at the previous inspection have been met. One recommendation is made to ensure that sufficient checks are made prior to a child being invited to visit the home.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that sufficient checks are made prior to a child being invited to visit the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 11, paragraph 2.4)

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: SC064472

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Willows (Devon) Ltd

Registered provider address: Stephen Quay Accountancy, The Granary, Hinton Business Park, Tarrant Hinton, Blandford Forum DT11 8JF

Responsible individual: Carolyn Coombes

Registered manager: Post Vacant

Inspector

Linda Bond, Social Care Inspector

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