

SC066565

Options Autism (1) Limited

Monitoring visit

Information about this children's home

The home is privately owned and is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to 26 children. The home provides a specialist service for children with autism spectrum disorder and associated learning disabilities. There is an on-site school which also caters for day pupils. Some children have a placement for 52 weeks a year, while others go home at the weekends and during the school holidays. The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

There has been no registered manager at this home since June 2021. An acting manager has been appointed to manage the home. An application has been made for them to register with Ofsted.

Inspection date: 5 April 2022

This monitoring visit

At a full inspection on 9 February 2022, the inspectors found serious and widespread concerns in relation to safeguarding practices and the leadership and management of the home.

Ofsted issued two compliance notices under section 22 of the Care Standards Act 2000. These were in relation to regulation 12, the protection of children standard, and regulation 13, the leadership and management standard.

The purpose of this visit was to assess the progress made to meet the compliance notices.

The new manager has worked hard to establish her leadership and management of the team. Staff feel well supported and recognise the impact the manager has had since being in post. One staff member said, 'There has been a massive change. [Manager's name] comes into the flats all of the time. The staff are finding this very helpful.'

Leaders and managers follow the local safeguarding procedures when concerns are raised about staff practice and take appropriate action to protect the children from harm. The investigation process, in consultation with the local authority designated officer, is thorough. The records maintained by leaders and managers provide a clear account of the actions taken and how matters have been followed through and concluded.

The regulator has been notified, as required by the regulations, when serious incidents have occurred in the home. The provider's new reporting system enables senior managers to monitor if the relevant agencies have been contacted. This enables the regulator to scrutinise and seek reassurance that the actions taken by leaders and managers help to keep children safe.

Additional employment checks and auditing of staff files have occurred to ensure that any concerns about staff practice have not been overlooked. Managers have agreed the actions needed to rectify the identified shortfalls. This ensures that recruitment practice is aligned with the regulations and that staff have the direction and guidance needed to provide protection for children.

A new procedure has been agreed with staff about the storage of personal belongings after a child found an item that could have caused them harm. However, this is not yet fully embedded as part of the staff's daily routine. The manager has an action plan in place to address this.

Leaders and managers have not improved the quality of restraint records since the last inspection. There are inconsistencies with the written details of restraints, and managers do not sufficiently evaluate the effectiveness of the actions taken by staff. The post-incident debrief by the manager with staff is limited and lacks professional curiosity. This hinders the manager's ability to identify ways to improve or strengthen practice.

Some of the children's risk assessments do not have up-to-date guidance for staff to follow. For example, information about administration of medication, areas to avoid when on an activity and frequency of the checks needed to monitor a child's well-being were not recorded or their details were inaccurate. This does not help staff to keep children safe.

The team has individual strategies for children to manage the dangers associated with self-injurious behaviours. Additional workshops have been made available for staff to give them a greater awareness of the children's needs. However, not all staff have the same level of training or guidance to help them cope with the demands of managing these types of complexities.

Overall, progress has been made since the last inspection. As such, the actions set out in the compliance notices issued have been met.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/02/2022	Full	Inadequate
08/01/2020	Full	Good
22/01/2019	Full	Good
03/07/2017	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 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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(v)(vi)(b)) The registered person must ensure that children's risk assessments have up-to-date strategies that are aligned to their current needs and associated risks.	29 May 2022
The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— a description of the measure and its duration;	29 May 2022

details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure;

the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and

within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")—

has spoken to the user about the measure; and

has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and

within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(iv)(v)(vii)(b)(i)(ii)(c))

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that they have a policy that enables them to imbed the routine needed for the safe storage of staff's belongings to prevent children having access to personal items that may cause them harm. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 50, paragraph 9.62)
- The registered person should ensure that all staff have the knowledge, guidance and support needed to care for children who display self-injurious behaviours. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the children's home since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC066565

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: Options Autism (1) Limited

Registered provider address: Atria, Spa Road, Bolton BL1 4AG

Responsible individual: Karen Ayres

Registered manager: Post Vacant

Inspectors

Aaron Mccloughlin, Social Care Inspector
Mrs Jenny Fenlon, Social Care Inspector

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