

SC066565

Registered provider: Options Autism (1) Limited

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is privately owned and provides care for up to 26 children.

The home provides a specialist service for children with an autistic spectrum condition and associated learning disabilities. There is an on-site school, which also caters for day pupils. Some children live in the home for 52 weeks a year, while others go home at the weekends and during the school holidays. Only the social care provision was inspected. At the time of the inspection, there were 15 children living in the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in June 2022.

Inspection date: 21 November 2023

Date of last inspection: 10 May 2023

Judgement at last inspection: good

Information about this inspection

At these inspections, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

The provider has restructured the children's living arrangements in line with plans to have three smaller registered homes within the same setting. This means that children live in three separate areas, with their own specific staff team and home manager. However, for this inspection, the setting was inspected as one home.

Staff have good relationships with the children. The home recently received an award for good practice with children on the autistic spectrum. Staff know the children well, can identify their needs and know how to meet these needs.

Staff spend time with the children and support them to enjoy varied activities. On occasions, the staffing ratio is not always in line with the children's needs. This has not raised any safeguarding concerns, but resulted in a delay in children accessing planned activities. Changes in the children's routine, can result in unnecessary upset for the children. The registered manager is aware of challenges around staff sufficiency and is actively recruiting staff.

Since the last inspection, further errors have taken place around the administration of children's medication. The registered manager recently reviewed medication procedures and has implemented a new system to help to reduce the likelihood of this reoccurring.

Some maintenance was taking place in the home during the inspection and actions were taken to address a health and safety matter. However, to help the children to live more comfortably, further repairs are required, and attention is needed to some children's bathrooms and the sensory area.

Staff receive mandatory training around how to safeguard children with disabilities. However, staff do not always follow the home's safeguarding procedures. A child made an allegation about a member of staff but there was a delay in this being reported to the registered manager.

Staff understand children's associated vulnerabilities. However, during an incident, staff were unable to gain access to a child who had locked themselves in an area of the home. The child was not offered support in line with their risk assessment and care plan. Management oversight also failed to identify any associated risks. This means that it is not clear what actions were taken to reduce any future risks to the child.

Gaps in the recording of some incidents mean that it is not clear whether staff have assessed children properly following an incident and considered whether children have injuries or require any medical support.

The registered manager challenges poor practice and staff conduct. The registered manager responds appropriately to safeguarding incidents and has positive links with the local authority designated officer. However, the three homes' managers now have the responsibility of separately escalating concerns, and they do not always share all required information with the designated officer. This restricts the oversight and monitoring of any possible patterns of concern around staff conduct.

Staff have access to mandatory training. However, not all staff have received specialist training to strengthen their communication with children. Staff are not supported to revisit or review safeguarding policies and procedures. The gaps in training mean that all staff have not had the opportunity to further develop their understanding around their safeguarding roles and responsibilities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/05/2023	Full	Good
07/06/2022	Full	Good
09/02/2022	Full	Inadequate
08/01/2020	Full	Good

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered persons 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 persons 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; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vii))	12 January 2024
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;	12 January 2024

ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(d)(h)) In particular, the registered persons must ensure that they have clear oversight of any allegations and how these are managed.	
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 any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(viii))	12 January 2024
In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably. (Regulation 6 (2)(a)(b)(vii)) In particular, the registered persons should ensure that home repairs are progressed in a timely manner, actions are taken to reduce any external issues impacting on the children's personal spaces, and children have access to suitable sensory areas.	12 January 2024

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: Toni Woods

Registered manager: Claire Monro

Inspectors

Gina Lightfoot, Social Care Inspector

Rachel Ruth, Social Care Inspector

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