

SC069176

Registered provider: Oakfields Children's Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is owned and managed by a private company. The home provides care for up to five children. The provider states in their statement of purpose that they provide care for children with EBD (social and emotional difficulties).

The manager of the home was registered with Ofsted in November 2008.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 February 2022

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	requires improvement to be 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: 21 August 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/08/2019	Full	Good
20/06/2018	Full	Good
05/10/2017	Full	Good
15/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

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

There are five children currently living in the home. All the children are engaging in some form of education. The manager and staff team have been creative in ensuring that children are attending educational provisions that meet their individual needs. For example, one child has disengaged from school, and so a tutor comes to the home. Another child has stopped attending college, so the manager and staff team have encouraged her to attend a Prince's Trust course.

The manager and staff prepare children well for independence. The home has an annex, which allows children to be self-sufficient while still having access to the main home. This promotes children's independence while balancing their need to still have trusted adults around them to provide reassurance and support.

Children's experiences of moving out of the home are variable. Some children have successfully moved on to independence, and some have returned home to live with their families. However, since the last inspection, there have been four unplanned moves for children. One child left in an unplanned way before subsequently returning to the home after the manager reconsidered their decision. His placement was then ended in an unplanned way for a second time. Unplanned moves leave children cautious about investing in future placements. Impact risk assessments are not completed before children come to live at the home, so the suitability of new admissions is not fully considered. Ultimately, this lack of risk assessment fails to ensure that staff can meet children's needs before they move to the home and has resulted in unplanned moves for children.

Children's plans are individualised, and the objectives are clear. However, not all plans are up to date, so staff do not always have the most up-to-date information in relation to the children that they care for.

The manager has not ensured that children's plans and relevant documents from the local authority are available for staff at the home to familiarise themselves with. Children's plans fail to provide clear direction for staff, so the manager and staff do not always know how to help children meet the goals in their plans. This lack of clarity fails to provide the manager with sufficient detail to measure children's progress and evaluate whether children are achieving their full potential.

Children's views are not gathered consistently, which restricts children's ability to contribute to how the home operates and how improvements to their care can be made.

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

Children said that they feel safe living at the home. They have trusted adults that they can talk to if they are worried.

Restraint is rarely used in the home, and when it is, it is necessary and proportionate. However, records of intervention do not include all the information required by regulation. This means that the manager and staff cannot evaluate the use of physical intervention to ensure that the measures used are safe and effective. This is a missed opportunity to learn from incidents and to ensure the safety and well-being of children.

Children's risk assessments and behaviour management plans are in place, but they are not all regularly reviewed. The quality of risk assessments is variable. Some are very specific and individualised; others lack detail and do not contain specific actions to reduce risks. The manager has identified that the plans do not show progress and has started to change the format of the risk assessments to track the reduction in risks effectively.

Staff do not help children to recognise and respond to risk in an age-appropriate way. Structured and planned conversations about risk do not take place regularly with the children. Discussions are usually organic conversations with children as and when needed, which do not address specific needs.

Children who go missing from home are not receiving a consistent, well-coordinated response that reduces the actual harm or risk of harm to children. Children are reported as missing promptly when they do not return home, and parents are always informed. However, the manager and staff team are not proactive enough in their attempts to locate children to ensure their safety while missing. They do not contact children on their mobile phones or go out to look for children. On one occasion, a child had been missing for two days, and staff had not taken any action to locate him. Incidents of children missing from home are not reviewed or evaluated to identify and consider the next steps that can be taken to prevent children from going missing again.

The records of incidents are variable. The manager uses a tier system to record incidents, using three different records. However, there is no evidence of management oversight on any of the records. The manager is therefore failing to demonstrate that she is ensuring that staff have taken appropriate action during these incidents. In addition, the manager is failing to identify triggers for children's behaviours and therefore direct staff about how to manage children's behaviour safely. Records do not provide an accurate account of incidents that take place at the home. For example, one member of staff had been assaulted by a child, but this was not recorded anywhere other than the staff member's supervision record.

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

The home benefits from a registered, qualified and experienced manager. The manager has been in post since 2008. The manager is approachable. Staff spoken to at the inspection were positive about her leadership.

A stable and consistent staff team means that children can build relationships with staff and form positive attachments. The manager and staff cover shifts when required, and agency staff are not used. This further promotes consistency of care.

Supervision takes place in line with the statement of purpose, and staff say that they feel they can approach the registered manager when necessary. However, supervision is very brief; children are not discussed in detail, and there is no opportunity for staff to reflect on the care that they are providing.

The manager has sourced a new training hub for the staff team. Staff and the manager have undertaken a range of training. This ensures that staff have up-to-date knowledge. However, not all staff have received training in relation to the specific needs of a child, despite him having lived at the home for almost a year. This fails to adequately equip the staff to meet the child's needs.

The manager has not yet implemented effective monitoring systems for the oversight and review of standards at the home. Therefore, her ability to identify shortfalls in practice and make the necessary improvements is limited. The absence of a monitoring system means that improved outcomes for children cannot be evidenced.

The home provides a warm and homely environment for children. However, there are outstanding repairs that need to be addressed, such as a child's damaged bedroom door. The furniture in another child's bedroom was damaged and needs to be replaced.

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 children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who— develop positive relationships with them; engage with them; and take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— regularly consult children, and seek their feedback, about the quality of the home's care. (Regulation 7 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(iv)) This specifically refers to gathering the children's views about the home and their care plans.	10 April 2022
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— take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies;	10 April 2022

that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(vi)(vii)(d)) This is specifically in relation to the home's response to children who are missing from home and that required repairs are made in a timely manner.	
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; 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)(h)) This refers to all staff being suitably trained in autism awareness and the manager evaluating and monitoring incidents to identify improvements for the care provided.	10 April 2022
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b)) This relates to ensuring the needs and impact of children moving into the home are considered and that children have a positive ending to their placement.	10 April 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—	10 April 2022

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. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(vii) (b)(i)(ii)) This is in relation to ensuring that staff debriefs after restraints are recorded and the effectiveness of the restraint is evaluated.	
Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children's home. The registered person must— maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4. (Regulation 37 (1) (2)(a)) This specifically refers to the manager ensuring that education, health and care plans and children's review minutes are obtained from the placing authority and kept on the child's file.	10 April 2022
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months. In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(b)(c))	10 April 2022

This specifically relates to the registered manager ensuring children's feedback is gathered to inform the quality of care and detail any actions for improvements.	
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- The registered person should ensure that supervision allows staff the opportunity to reflect on their own feelings and behaviours and how they may affect the children they care for. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.15)

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: SC069176

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Oakfields Children's Care Limited

Registered provider address: Library Chambers, 48 Union Street, Hyde, Cheshire SK14 1ND

Responsible individual: Ben Greenough

Registered manager: Lisa Greenough

Inspector

Rachael Crook, Social Care Inspector

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