

SC407430

Registered provider: Wessex College Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private provider and offers care for up to four children. Care is provided for children with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. At the time of this inspection, two children were living at the home.

There has been no registered manager in post since 5 April 2024. The newly appointed deputy manager is currently in day-to-day control of the home. The manager post has been advertised.

During this inspection, the inspector was informed that the home had been acquired by a new private provider.

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 August 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

inadequate

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: 10 August 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/08/2023	Full	Good
20/10/2022	Full	Good
12/01/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness
27/04/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

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

The two children living at the home have lived there for two years and say that they are currently happy there.

Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes in the home's management team and in the staff team. Several staff left at the same time leaving a small group of existing staff. Leaders and managers recognise that this affected morale among the remaining staff and resulted in some instability. Senior leaders report that these changes were managed well with children and consequently have not impacted significantly on them. This view is not shared by all those at the home. Some staff say there has been inconsistency in care and boundaries for children.

Children have expressed their concerns about the changes in staff to the independent visitor. One child felt that there is no point in building relationships 'when everyone leaves' and is anticipating more staff departures because they can 'guess who is going to leave next'. One child said they do not like it when staff that they do not know well work in the home.

Children experience an inconsistent approach to their care, boundaries and routines. The quality of written plans is poor, confusing and contradictory. Children's plans are also not up to date and it is not clear if information contained in them is still relevant. This impacts directly on children, for example one child was permitted to use a device to search the internet, however some plans say this is a risk while another document's allow this. Staff are therefore left with confused written guidance about the care they should be providing.

Managers and staff are not supporting an encouraging children's involvement in their care planning. For example, some plans are written in the first person, despite the children not being involved in devising them. The plans also contain institutional, vague and emotive language which detracts from the clarity of the information recorded and does not make them child-friendly documents.

Staff have supported some children to make some progress. One child has sat their GCSEs and is awaiting their results. Children are rightly proud of their educational achievements, and this has increased their confidence and self-esteem. Staff have celebrated these achievements with children.

Staff encourage and support children to take part in a range of different activities. One child loves cooking and proudly showed off their skills. The other child is an avid reader and also loves listening to music. Both talked excitedly about all the things they are able to do, and both were looking forward to their summer holiday in a lodge by the coast.

Staff provide children with a comfortable, well-furnished home. Children are encouraged to put forward ideas for how the home is decorated and furnished, especially their bedrooms, which are personalised to their individual tastes.

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

Most safeguarding concerns have been managed appropriately, including referrals to external safeguarding professionals. However, not all staff are confident about who to report safeguarding concerns to. One member of staff said this was because of the changes in the management team, meaning they do not know who to report to. This has resulted in concerns about staff practice not being shared with leaders and managers. Action was taken during the inspection to address these concerns. Separate concerns have been raised about poor staff practice. These concerns are currently being investigated.

The quality of internal investigations are weak which impacts on how quickly and effectively actions to improve safeguarding practice can be implemented. Staff and children reported concerns about the accuracy of findings from one investigation. In response, leaders reviewed and subsequently reopened the investigation due to its poor quality. Actions to improve were not completed and leaders and managers had not taken responsibility for this. This has caused unnecessary drift. ,left unassigned and therefore drift has occurred in .

Behaviour and risks are generally managed appropriately. The approach to behaviour management is not punitive. Staff work with children to help them to develop an understanding of their behaviour, recognise their emotions and develop coping strategies.

Restraint is rarely used. However, meaningful conversations with children and staff involved in restraint do not consistently take place. This does not support those involved to reflect on the event and identify where lessons can be learned. On some occasions, managers involved in incidents and restraints have also completed the management oversight. This limits independent assessment of what happened.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Significant changes to the leadership and management of this home has had a detrimental impact on children. The registered manager, deputy manager and several members of staff left in April 2024. A new manager was appointed but did not apply to register with Ofsted before they also left. A newly appointed deputy manager is currently in day-to-day charge of the home. Leaders recognise they need a skilled person to apply to manage the home and are attempting to recruit to this post.

Several different managers from other parts of the organisation have been assigned to support the home. Consequently, this support is fragmented and does not provide staff with the necessary consistency or effective oversight. The current responsible individual

does not have sufficient time to provide the full-time consistent support that the home needs.

Monitoring and oversight of the home are not fully effective. There is a lack of action being taken when issues have been identified. Staff morale is variable. Staff do not feel valued or supported by the wider organisation. They are positive about the new deputy manager but acknowledge she is new to the role and needs more effective support to develop in the role.

Staff are not receiving regular, good-quality supervision. When supervision has been held, there is a lack of follow-up actions, even when staff have raised points of concern. In one case, known concerns about a member of staff's practice had not been followed up with them in supervision discussions.

The organisation carries out exit interviews with staff who have left. However, the system does not enable leaders and managers to identify if there is any learning for this home specifically.

Leaders and managers carried out a review of practice when a child had an unplanned move from the home earlier this year. This review lacks clarity on learning from this experience, and what actions to take to prevent a reoccurrence.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(iv)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that staff provide children with consistent care and boundaries. In addition, that children's plans are effective working documents that provide staff with clear and consistent guidance, and are kept up to date to reflect the child's current needs, including any actions as the result of incidents or events.	13 September 2024
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—	13 September 2024

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; 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; 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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii))	
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— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home;	13 September 2024

demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; and feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(c)(f)(g)(i)(ii)(h))	
The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children's home if— there is no registered manager in respect of the home; and the registered provider— is an organisation or a partnership; does not satisfy regulation 28; or is not, or does not intend to be, in day-to-day charge of the home. If the registered provider appoints a person to manage the home, the registered provider must, without delay, give HMCI notice of— the name of the person so appointed; and the date on which the appointment takes effect. (Regulation 27 (1)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(iii) (2)(a)(b))	13 September 2024
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)) In particular, the registered person must ensure supervision provided is regular and of good quality, to support the member of staff and aid their development.	13 September 2024

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: SC407430

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Wessex College Limited

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

Responsible individual: Teresa Coxford

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Wendy Anderson, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024