

SC407430

Registered provider: Wessex College

Interim inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is one of six homes operated by a private organisation. The organisation also owns a school and a farm, which children from this home may attend. The home can provide care for up to four children aged over 11 years who may have experienced trauma and/or abuse, and who may have attachment difficulties.

The home has not had a registered manager since September 2018, a period of 68 weeks. Although a number of prospective managers have been appointed, on the day of this inspection there had been no valid application to Ofsted.

Inspection date: 10 January 2020

Date of last inspection: 21 May 2019

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

This inspection

The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection

This home was judged requires improvement to be good at the last full inspection. At the interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has sustained effectiveness.

By 10 January 2020, the home will have been without a registered manager for 68 weeks. Ofsted has written to the provider and manager to advise them that it is an offence under the Care Standards Act 2000 for a person to manage a home unless they are registered with Ofsted. The lack of a registered manager underpins all the shortfalls found at this inspection. Leaders have taken action to recruit to the manager's position and the current manager is submitting an application to register.

At the time of the full inspection on 21 May 2019, the home's three residents were making some progress. After that inspection, one younger child became very unsettled and distressed. The company identified that it could not meet all this child's needs and, appropriately, gave notice on his placement. While waiting for a new placement to be identified, the child became more distressed, resulting in serious incidents. These included damage to the fabric of the home, assaults on the staff and police involvement. This escalated until the child had to move urgently.

Lack of management oversight and staff shortages throughout this period left a relatively inexperienced staff team struggling to cope. There were insufficient permanent, skilled and qualified staff on duty to manage the children and young people's complex behaviours safely. On some occasions, agency staff were on duty with inexperienced team members. Staff varied in their skills and confidence in establishing and maintaining professional boundaries.

For example, some staff, who have since left the home, encouraged the children and young people to engage in over-stimulating activities and avoided confrontation by giving in to the children and young people's inappropriate requests. Lack of consistent boundaries proved to be confusing and unhelpful for the children and young people. Staff who did try to implement boundaries were sometimes targeted and harmed.

During this period, some health and safety matters were overlooked. The young people obtained a staff member's car keys and attempted to take the car. An oil burner was permitted in a bedroom, resulting in a small but potentially dangerous fire, which set off the smoke detectors. Lack of effective monitoring meant that an unrestricted upstairs window was not identified in time to prevent a young person from attempting to climb out.

Since the youngest child's placement ended in June 2019, the situation in the home has improved. The responsible individual took decisive action to restructure and strengthen the senior leadership team. In September 2019, she appointed a new manager to the home, who is supported by two deputies.

The prospective registered manager has clear aspirations for the home. She holds a qualification at level 3 and has applied to undertake the leadership and management level 5 award. Her application to Ofsted is complete and ready for submission.

The manager has established good monitoring systems to ensure effective oversight of the home. She has improved the quality and frequency of staff supervision, so that the staff now feel well supported.

There is now a full staff team, so agency staff are no longer needed. The team has become more stable, morale has improved, and everyone works together to achieve consistent boundaries. As a result, relationships between the staff and the young people are now positive, and incidents have reduced in severity and frequency.

The young people and staff can now identify a tangible culture change in the home. They told the inspector that they welcome consistent boundaries. They find the new manager to be fair, child-centred and fun. They enjoy having a permanent staff team. As a result, the young people have made good progress, and some now have jobs outside the home to provide them with valuable work experience.

Since the last inspection, the manager and staff have improved the quality of the environment, although there is still some work to be done. For example, there are plans to make the office more child-friendly and accessible.

All five requirements made at the last full inspection have been met. A further requirement has been made for the manager to register with Ofsted.

The inspector found electrical and food items in a cupboard in the staff bathroom, adjacent to the shower. This does not promote good safety and hygiene, so a recommendation has been made.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/05/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
24/10/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
05/04/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good
12/06/2017	Full	Requires improvement to be 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 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. (Regulation 13 (1)(2)(a)). In particular, ensure that the person who has been appointed to manage the home is registered with Ofsted without delay.	28/02/2020

Recommendation

- Ensure that children's homes comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene etc.). However, in doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', April 2015, page 15, paragraph 3.9). In particular, ensure that safe storage is provided for electrical and food items.

Information about this inspection

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full 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

Registered provider address: Wessex College Limited, 4 Cedar Park, Cobham Road, Ferndown Industrial Estate, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 7SF.

Responsible individual: Joanne Sams

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Heather Chaplin, Social Care Inspector

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