

SC411030

Registered provider: Meadows Care Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is one of several children's homes operated by a private company. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three children and young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

If required, children and young people can access the organisation's school and therapy department.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since March 2018.

Inspection dates: 30 to 31 July 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 23 October 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/10/2018	Full	Good
24/01/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
20/06/2017	Full	Good
16/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness

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 registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. In particular, the registered person must ensure that— medicines kept in the home are stored in a secure place so as to prevent any child from having unsupervised access to them. (Regulation 23 (1)(2)(a)) Specifically, ensure that medication is stored securely, including controlled medication, which should be stored and managed in line with the Misuse of Drugs (Safe Custody) Regulations 1973.	04/09/2019
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy which— sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect. The procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect must, in particular— provide for the prompt referral of an allegation about current or ongoing abuse or neglect in relation to a child to the placing authority and, if different, the local authority in whose area the home is located. (Regulation 34 (1)(b)(2)(b)) Specifically, ensure that the placing authority and/or the designated officer are consulted prior to allegations being assessed as unsubstantiated.	04/09/2019
When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person—	04/09/2019

if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires. (Regulation 44 (2)(a))	
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Recommendations

- Staff should ensure that each child understands the home's procedures and policies for respecting their confidentiality. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.12)

Specifically, staff should ensure that they log off when not using the office computers and ensure that children do not have access to private and confidential information.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The experience of living at this home is having a positive impact on the lives of the children. Staff have worked hard to establish positive and caring relationships with the children. Children regard this as their home, having developed a sense of belonging and stability that has enabled them to make good progress in many aspects of their lives. A social worker said, 'The journey for [name] has been magnificent, looking at where he has come from and where he is now. He is enjoying his experiences and sees this as his home.'

Staff value and promote education. They work closely with education professionals and ensure that each child receives the individual support they require. The effectiveness of this support is evident through the significantly improved attendance for one child and another child successfully completing his GCSEs.

Staff are proactive in their efforts to support children to be healthy. They ensure that children can access routine health services, and they work closely with specialist health professionals to ensure that each child's unique and specific needs are met.

The voice of the child is integral to the daily running of the home. Staff show an interest in what children have to say and children confirm that they feel listened to and involved in making decisions about the home and their care. One child said, 'I don't need to complain because when you ask staff they sort it out, and when they can't, they tell you why.'

Children benefit from one-to-one therapy sessions. Information is sensitively shared between therapists and staff, who demonstrate an insightful understanding of each child's therapeutic care plan. This enables them to respond consistently with warmth, affection and empathy, particularly when behaviour is at its most challenging. This patient, trauma-informed approach reinforces to children that staff care about them and

have their best interests at heart. One child said, 'It is a perfect place to live. I can talk to any of the staff because I know that they care about me.'

Staff recognise the importance of family relationships and do their best to support and improve contact. They maintain strong links with family members and provide good support that enables children to sustain friendships back in their home community when it is safe to do so. A parent said, 'Staff always go out of their way to make me feel welcome when I visit [name]. He is doing well, and I have noticed a big difference when he is out with me. He is always respectful and polite, which makes my time with him really enjoyable.'

Children are encouraged to participate in a wide range of recreational activities. They are supported to pursue their individual interests and hobbies, as well as to engage in activities that will be beneficial for the future. For example, one child spoke proudly about his achievements during a recent outdoor activity week which he completed as part of the National Citizenship Service scheme.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

There continues to be a good emphasis on working with children to educate and empower them to make good choices about their own safety. This includes helping them to understand and manage their own risks in the context of restrictive legal orders, which, if breached, would be of significant consequence to them. This candid, open and honest approach means that a good balance between protection and the right to take age-appropriate risks is achieved.

Risk assessment plans have been developed in partnership with a range of professionals and agencies that play a significant role in monitoring and reducing offending and risk-taking behaviour. These plans are regularly reviewed and consistently implemented by the manager and staff. A specialist police officer wrote that, 'The manager and staff work very well with me in terms of sharing information promptly, assessing risk and addressing issues.' She went on to say, 'I am kept up to date and staff will ask for advice or guidance if they are unsure of any situation.'

A recent increase in incidents of one child going missing and increase in incidents of substance misuse have given cause for concern. Records demonstrate that staff have responded to these incidents effectively. The manager has requested multi-agency meetings as well as the increased involvement of substance misuse services, which will continue for the foreseeable future, even though these behaviours appear to have subsided.

Staff take a calm and patient approach to helping children to manage their behaviour. They understand each child's triggers and know how to respond to best support each child when they are presenting challenging behaviour. They make effective use of relationships and de-escalation techniques, which means that the use of physical restraint is extremely rare. Staff encourage children to reflect on their behaviours and develop strategies for better regulating their emotions. The effectiveness of this

approach is evident in the significant reduction in tantrums and outbursts for one child, whose change has been notable.

There has been only one allegation made against staff since the last inspection. While appropriate action was taken to ensure that the child was safe, managers failed to demonstrate good decision-making. For example, there is no evidence that the organisation's designated safeguarding lead consulted with the placing authority and/or the designated officer prior to closing the matter. Failing to gather an external view prior to decision-making does not sufficiently protect children from harm. Positively, the organisation has reviewed its allegation management policy, which, if implemented effectively, will address this issue.

The arrangements for storing medication require improvement. The cabinets that are being used currently are insufficiently robust. They do not meet the requirements of the Misuse of Drugs (Safe Custody) Regulations 1973, which stipulate the requirements for storing controlled medication. Of greater concern is that the keys to medicine cabinets, one containing controlled medication, were hung in an open key box next to the cabinets. The poor arrangements for storing medication, including controlled medicines, place children at risk.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is run by a competent manager who is child-focused and prioritises children's needs effectively. She is fully involved in all aspects of care planning and acts as a positive conduit between the home, parents and external agencies.

The manager is close to completing the level 5 qualification. She is an experienced child care practitioner, who is developing a motivational leadership style that encourages and supports staff to prioritise children's needs.

Children benefit from the care and support from a committed staff team. Although there have been several personnel changes since the last inspection, the current team provides a good mix in terms of experience, age and gender.

Staff describe the manager as supportive, visible and always available. They receive regular supervision that provides a good balance between staff welfare and professional development.

Staff have good access to mandatory and needs-led training and are supported to acquire a qualification relevant to their role. The manager is constantly looking for ways to improve staff knowledge and makes good use of team meetings to discuss current theory and research in the context of caring for this group of children.

Monitoring activity is generally good. The manager maintains good oversight of staff practice, care planning and the progress that children make. Her six-monthly monitoring report is comprehensive and detailed, and highlights how children have benefited from living at the home. Areas for improvement are clearly identified and are used to inform

the home's development plan, which is focused on supporting children to achieve their individual targets and goals.

The overall quality of external monitoring is good. The manager uses this process to support an improvement agenda. Children's views are regularly captured in the independent visitor reports and there is an improved representation of the views of professionals who are involved in children's care. However, the independent visitor still does not gather or use the views of parents in their monitoring, despite this being a requirement at the last inspection.

Children's records provide a comprehensive picture of each child's individual needs, progress and targets for development. Most records are held electronically, with each member of staff having their own log in details. However, during the inspection a child came into the office and accessed a computer that had not been logged off by staff. The child was not challenged, and, while it is acknowledged that nothing of significance was accessed, this does not promote confidentiality.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC411030

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Meadows Care Ltd

Registered provider address: Meadows Care Ltd, Egerton House, Wardle Road, Rochdale, OL12 9EN

Responsible individual: Karen Brandon

Registered manager: Stephanie Pollitt

Inspector(s)

Paul Scott, social care inspector

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