

SC464762

Registered provider: Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority short-breaks service provides short periods of residential care for up to six children with physical and/or learning disabilities.

The manager was registered with Ofsted in April 2013 and is suitably qualified and experienced.

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

We last visited this setting on 3 March 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 February 2022

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

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

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

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 8 October 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/10/2018	Full	Good
20/11/2017	Full	Good
23/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
28/11/2016	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children make good progress. Through the use of communication aids, they begin to influence decisions that affect their daily lives. Consequently, children develop independence skills and learn how to care for themselves. One child has learnt to tie her shoelaces and prepare breakfast for herself.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, children have continued to enjoy socialising with other children during their short-breaks. One family member told the inspector, 'I feel he is safe when he comes here and the staff know him very well. I feel comfortable leaving him here; I know he is being looked after well. He likes his stays'.

Children seek appropriate physical affection and contact from staff, which staff welcome. This can include holding hands and giving appropriate hugs. Staff know the children very well and have a good knowledge of their individual needs and vulnerabilities. This gives children a sense of acceptance and security when they are away from their families.

Staff are skilful in supporting children to express their views, wishes and feelings. They modify their communication skills through a range of aids to meet the needs of individual children. As a result, children can contribute to decisions that affect their lives and feel listened to.

The learning experiences for children are good. Staff encourage children to succeed in their education and make sure that all achievements, no matter how small, are celebrated. This enables children to feel valued and have a sense of pride in what they achieve.

Staff ensure children's health needs are met. They have specific knowledge about children's medical needs. Children's health plans are followed to ensure that children have the correct treatment. As a result, children experience safe care when staff attend to their personal needs.

The registered manager and staff have good partnership working with others. This includes parents, teachers, special-care nurses and social workers. Children benefit from this tailored support, which has a positive impact on the progress they make.

Despite the good progress, children's records are not always regularly reviewed and updated. For example, documents tracking children's progress do not always contain the relevant information. This means that staff are not able to measure children's achievements or what further support they may need.

Children live in a stimulating and warm environment. The home is nurturing, and its décor and design meet the specific needs of each child. Children take pride in and enjoy their own personal space; they have an array of personal possessions.

However, some aspects of the home are not welcoming. For example, children watch the television through a glass cabinet without a good safeguarding reason, and this is not kept under review. This is despite children having televisions in their bedrooms, which they use without the need for these.

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

Children who have complex health and learning needs enjoy their short-breaks because knowledgeable and skilled staff protect them. Staff work collaboratively with parents, family members and professionals to mitigate risks and ensure children are supported. Consequently, staff are aware of safeguarding risks and respond to them promptly.

Staff are highly trained to understand safeguarding and child protection. In addition, staff receive training to carry out medical procedures such as the safe administration of emergency medication. This comprehensive training helps to ensure that children's health needs are met effectively.

Incidents of children going missing from the home are rare. However, there are risk assessments in place with strategies to follow if children go missing from home. Staff have a good understanding of procedures and the importance of liaising with the police and other local services. These measures promote children's safety and demonstrate that staff care about them and want them to return home safely.

Staff have conversations with children about a range of topics, and how to manage their emotions and anxieties. However, staff do not always have discussions with children to celebrate the positive work they do to enrich children's lives. This is a missed opportunity to capture these positive experiences.

Incidents of restraint are rare and are always a last resort. The registered manager and staff implement strategies well to de-escalate children's behaviours. Staff have a good understanding of their behavioural management policies. Children benefit from this approach and this contributes to their positive experiences. However, staff do not always provide detailed records of incidents when low-level restraints have been used.

Staff ensure that each child has an individualised risk assessment to reflect their specific vulnerabilities. However, staff do not always show professional curiosity and vigilance. For example, on several occasions, staff failed to monitor a child's electronic devices when there was a potential risk of exploitation. Furthermore, not all staff read and understand children's risk assessments. This has the potential to leave vulnerable children at risk of harm.

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

Throughout the pandemic, the registered manager has not ensured that all core staff complete a range of refresher mandatory training courses in caring for children. For

example, some staff's training has expired in topics such as equality and diversity, and manual handling. This omission has the potential to compromise the children's safety and the staff's ability to update their knowledge.

The registered manager does not always use his monitoring and review systems effectively. For example, he has failed to ensure that all staff who have worked in the home for a long time have satisfactory qualifications to meet the needs of children. Two of the staff members have not achieved the level 3 diploma for residential childcare within the required time frame.

Staff provide positive feedback and confirm they are well supported by the registered manager. Staff benefit from regular team meetings. However, the quality and frequency of staff supervision are variable. Furthermore, the registered manager does not always use supervision and appraisals effectively to monitor staff progress and professional development. This does not promote staff development and improve practice within the home.

Children do not receive consistent care due to a continued shortage of staff. In the past 12 months, core staff have been temporarily relocated to other homes. This has negatively impacted on what services are provided to the children. One child's carer told the inspector that he likes the home but 'sometimes we have to make other arrangements as the service is not available because there are not enough staff'. Senior managers have a recruitment campaign in place.

Managers do not always ensure that the independent visitor to the home seeks the views of children, their families or social workers. This may limit the quality of their view as children's views and external feedback are not always sought.

The registered manager has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. He is ambitious and passionate about providing a good quality of care to the children. He works closely with professionals, and feedback is positive. These partnerships mean that children are protected, feel secure and know that everyone has their best interests at heart.

The registered manager is very responsive to feedback and advice from the regulatory body. He has taken action to meet the requirement raised at the last inspection.

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 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; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and 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)(i)(iii)(v)(vi)(d)) This particularly refers to staff ensuring that risk assessments are reviewed and kept up to date. It also relates to ensuring that all aspects of the home are welcoming.	18 March 2022
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—	18 March 2022

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 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; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(b) (2)(a)(c)(d)(e)(h)) This particularly refers to the registered manager ensuring that all staff receive refresher mandatory training. It also relates to the registered manager ensuring that they have sufficient staff to provide consistent care to the children. It also relates to the registered manager ensuring they use internal monitoring systems more effectively.	
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children’s safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children’s home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate	18 March 2022

qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained— the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma. The relevant date is— in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home; or in the case of an individual who was working in a care role in a home on 1st April 2014, 1st April 2016. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (4)(a)(b) (5)(a)(b)) This specifically relates to the registered manager ensuring that all staff have completed the relevant qualification in residential childcare.	
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b)(c)) This specifically relates to the registered manager ensuring that all staff receive regular reflective supervision and appraisals.	18 March 2022
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)) This relates to staff ensuring that all children's record are updated.	18 March 2022

Recommendations

- The registered manager should ensure that physical intervention records contain all the relevant information. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraphs 9.59).
- The registered manager should ensure that the appointed independent person undertakes a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.5).

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: SC464762

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

Registered provider address: Civic Centre, Darwall Street, Walsall WS1 1TP

Responsible individual: Jivan Sembi

Registered manager: Glen Jones

Inspector

Patrick McIntosh, Social Care Inspector

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