

SC478001

Registered provider: Longdon Hall School Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home registered in July 2014 and is owned and operated by a private company. The home provides care for up to four children who have suffered early childhood trauma.

The home is currently without a registered manager. The post has been vacant since 31 January 2023.

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 March 2023

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: 12 January 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/01/2022	Full	Good
12/06/2019	Full	Good
25/07/2018	Full	Good
03/07/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

The home has recently experienced a significant level of staff turnover and several staff, including the registered manager and deputy manager, have left their roles. In addition, other staff are also due to leave in the coming weeks. The home's responsible individual was due to leave the company the day after the inspection ended. During the inspection, senior leaders informed the inspector that they were working with the children's placing authorities to arrange for the children to move out of the home. The regional manager said that they plan to close the home while they recruit a new management and staff team. Consequently, this level of disruption has had an impact on children's progress and experiences in the home.

Two children were living at the home at the time of this inspection. Since the last inspection, three children have moved into the home and five children have left. Their overall experiences and outcomes are mixed. For example, the two children currently living in the home do not attend education or engage with their learning. Also, staff and leaders have failed to take efficient action to address the children's barriers to their learning. However, before moving on from the home, three other children lived in the home for several years and made progress with their education.

Managers do not always ensure that they assess children's needs and risks effectively before children move into the home. Poor placement matching and consideration of children's known risks has meant that the potential impact on the other children has not been identified. As a result, the number of significant incidents for some children has increased. Consequently, this has had a detrimental impact on some children's progress and has meant that they have had to leave the home prematurely.

In contrast, staff have supported three other children to move on from the home and on to independence successfully. Their transitions were well planned, and they were supported by staff. In addition, staff and managers promoted and developed the children's independence skills by carrying out regular reviews and assessments of their skills and needs. Also, managers skilfully balanced the risks with opportunities for children to improve their skills. As a result, these children were better prepared when they moved on from the home.

Overall, relationships between staff and children are positive. The inspector observed the children sharing humour and engaging well with the staff who have remained working in the home. These relationships help children to make some progress. However, external professionals and family members have also commented on the impact that staff and managers leaving has had on the current children.

Staff support children to maintain relationships with the people who are important to them. For example, children regularly spend time with their families. Furthermore, staff work with children and their families to overcome any problems and increase the time they spend together. One parent said, 'The home and staff have been amazing for [name of child] and I get to see [name of child] every week.' This supportive approach helps children to stay connected with the people who are important in their lives.

Children benefit from a pleasant home environment. Their bedrooms are nicely decorated and suitably furnished. However, other areas of the home require some improvement and there is excessive signage, such as fire exit signs, on display. This has the potential to devalue the ethos and create an institutionalised feel to the home.

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

Staff do not always show professional curiosity in their work with children who are at risk of exploitation. For example, despite known exploitation concerns with children, staff allow them to have free time in the community without any review of the risks. Furthermore, they do not routinely check on who the children are meeting in the community when they are allowed free time. There have been several occasions when children have not returned from free time and gone missing from the home. Failing to assess and take action to reduce risks leaves children at potential risk of harm.

Since the last inspection, there has been a high number of incidents of children going missing from the home. Some responses by staff and managers to safeguard children are good. For example, on some occasions, staff have followed children, leaders have attended regular meetings and intelligence has been shared with the police. Also, staff always ensure that children are interviewed by an independent person when they return.

However, on other occasions, staff have failed to carry out searches of known locations and areas used by children. In addition, staff have failed to always act on information given to them by the children when they are missing. For example, when missing from the home, one child told staff that they were in an area which the child is known to use. However, staff did not search that area. These shortfalls leave children vulnerable and compromise their safety.

Staff carry out searches of children's bedrooms when they have concerns for their welfare due to substance misuse. However, staff do not routinely record that they have carried out these searches or document any items removed. Also, they do not carry out regular work with children to discuss the reasons for limiting their privacy. These missed opportunities do not help children to learn or understand the consequences of their behaviour.

Leaders respond efficiently and effectively to allegations made by children. They ensure that senior leaders and the relevant external professionals are informed to safeguard children. As a result, investigations are carried out in a timely manner and appropriate decisions are made to maintain children's safety and well-being. In addition, children are spoken to and informed of the outcomes. This helps children to feel that they are valued and listened to.

Staff manage incidents where children become anxious effectively. On a few occasions, staff have been required to use physical restraint to keep children safe. These measures are used as a last resort and are proportionate to the behaviour. Furthermore, the manager has ensured that staff and children have been spoken to following every incident. Children told the inspector that they feel safe and said that staff listen to them.

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

Since the last inspection, senior leaders have informed staff and managers that they plan to reduce the number of staff working in the home. Poor communication and a failure to manage this information sensitively has meant that the management team and several staff have found alternative employment and left the home suddenly. The regional manager said that they plan to close the home while they recruit a new management and staff team. This lack of consistency and continuity in the care provided has had an impact on children's day-to-day experiences in the home.

However, since the departure of the management team, the home has been overseen and supported by the responsible individual, a regional manager and a registered manager from a sister home. These leaders have provided some stability and support for the remaining staff and children. They have quickly been able to assess the home's strengths and weaknesses and put in place support systems. As a result, staff have felt reassured by this support. The regional manager has also completed a reflection and learning review to ensure that the provider can learn from this experience.

Management oversight and systems used by managers to monitor the home require improvement. For example, the current systems have failed to identify shortfalls in children's risk management strategies and several recording errors in children's records. Consequently, monitoring systems do not currently drive improvement and therefore do not consistently improve the experiences of children.

Despite the shortfalls, staff receive regular supervision and appraisal of their performance. Supervision records are good, and staff say that they are feeling more reassured by the covering management team. Leaders provide staff with actions, and there is evidence of reflection on their practice. This helps staff to improve and become more confident in their role.

Staff receive regular training that is specific to the children's needs. For example, staff have completed training in areas such as child exploitation, substance misuse,

internet safety and missing from home. In addition, managers have carried out focused workshops during team meetings to further develop staff's skills. This provides staff with an understanding of the risks and dangers that children face. However, not all staff are consistently working together or using their learning in practice when supporting and safeguarding children.

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; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(vi)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that staff assess children's risks effectively and take action to keep children safe when they are missing from the home. In addition, staff should ensure that they assess children's risks effectively before allowing them free time out of the home. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	19 April 2023
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—	19 April 2023

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 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; 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)(e)(f)(h)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that the home has sufficient staff in place to work with children to protect them from harm and provide continuity of care. In addition, the registered person should ensure that they have effective oversight and monitoring of children's risks and staff's response to significant incidents in the home. It further relates to the manager's oversight of the quality of care children receive in the home. Leaders must also have clear monitoring and review systems in place to improve practice and understand children's progress and experiences.	
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. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose; that arrangements are in place to— ensure the effective induction of each child into the home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(i))	19 April 2023

In particular, leaders should ensure that they carry out suitable assessments to determine whether the home can meet children's needs. In addition, they must put in place measures to ensure that children's transitions into the home are managed sensitively and supported appropriately.	
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— help each child to understand how the child's privacy will be respected and the circumstances when it may have to be limited. (Regulation 7 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(v)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that staff carrying out searches of a child's bedroom accurately record that they have done so. Furthermore, staff should carry out work with children to discuss the reasons for limiting their privacy in the home.	19 April 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the home is a nurturing and supportive environment that meets the needs of the children. While the home must comply with relevant health and safety legislation, such as alarms and food hygiene, it should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than an 'institutional' impression. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that children are in full-time education while they are of compulsory school age unless their personal education plan contained in the care plan or other relevant plan states otherwise. The home must aim to support full-time attendance at school unless the child's relevant plan indicates this is not in their best interests. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.14)

- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: SC478001

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Longdon Hall School Limited

Registered provider address: Bryn Melyn Care Limited, Atria, Spa Road, Bolton, Greater Manchester BL1 4AG

Responsible individual: Rebecca Maltby

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Dean Wilton, Social Care Inspector

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