

SC478152

Registered provider: Phoenix Learning & Care Holdings Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home provides care for up to four children and specialises in providing time-limited accommodation for children who need emergency care.

The home has not had a registered manager since September 2022. The previous manager applied to register but withdrew their application. The current manager has been in post since December 2023 and is not yet registered with Ofsted but has submitted their application.

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 March 2024

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: 10 August 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/08/2022	Full	Good
12/01/2022	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
24/08/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
30/10/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

Children do not always have positive experiences at this home. How well children are helped and protected, and the effectiveness of leaders and managers have impacted on the overall experiences children have here.

This home specialises in providing short-term placements to children, often on an emergency basis. As a result, children sometimes move into the home at short notice and have a range of complex needs and experiences. At the time of the inspection one child was living in the home, they had only very recently moved in. Since the previous inspection, four children have come to live here and three children have moved on.

Before children move to the home, managers and staff carefully consider their needs and risk. One child recently moved into the home and their move was well planned. The manager consulted extensively with professionals and with their previous carers. The child was able to meet with the manager and have some photos and information about the home before moving in, which they found helpful. The child reported that their experience of moving into the home had been a positive one and that they felt welcomed and well cared for by staff.

Most children experience a positive move on from the home. Staff supported one child to move on to a long-term place to live. Staff also manage to keep in touch with some children once they have moved on and maintain a positive relationship. However, one child moved on more quickly than planned as staff were unable to meet their needs.

The progress and outcomes for children are mixed. For some children, the support from staff is good and enables them to make good progress. For example, staff were able to support one child to continue attending education and to develop and improve their self-care skills and some children develop positive relationships and start to settle.

However, for one child, staff were not skilled to meet their needs, this impacted on the amount of progress the child was able to make. For example, staff were not able to support them to engage in education or activities in the community. The child had little positive experiences during their time here.

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

A high number of serious incidents took place throughout one child's time at the home. Staff were not skilled to meet this child's needs and the child had to move

out which was not in line with their plans. Their experience at this home was not positive.

Guidance for staff on how best to support children has not been clear. Staff have not been able to establish appropriate routines and boundaries from the point that children move into the home. As a result, some children have experienced inconsistent care and responses from staff. Due to a lack of clarity about expectations for children, when staff have attempted to put boundaries in place, children have sometimes responded strongly and become angry and upset due to these inconsistencies.

When incidents take place, staff do not always support children in the moment effectively and appropriately. Children are not always provided with therapeutic and consistent support when they are showing signs they are in distress and need support from staff to help them calm.

Forty-nine incidents of restraint have occurred for two children. When restraint has been used, this has generally been in appropriate circumstances and to prevent serious harm. However, the need for restraint is indicative of staff not having the skills and knowledge to provide children with the support they need from them and to de-escalate incidents effectively.

Management oversight and action during these serious incidents and periods of time where children were not settled was not robust. They did not take quick enough action to learn from these occasions and develop staff practice to ensure the children had the right support they needed.

There have been no instances of children going missing from home. Staff understand any potential risk associated to children who are at risk of going missing from home and appropriate protocols are in place for staff to follow if a child was to go missing. However, this guidance is not clear in places and does not fully consider risks that are specific to the location of the home.

When children report concerns about staff, these are managed appropriately and relevant processes are followed. The current manager has acknowledged the importance of maintaining curiosity, ensuring that children are listened to and quick action is taken should they share concerns.

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

A significant number of changes to staffing and management has occurred in the past 18 months. The home has been without a registered manager since September 2022. A manager was appointed and applied to register but withdrew their application. The current manager has been in post since December 2023. Three managers have overseen the home during this period, and several senior care staff have left the home. During this period there has been some poor leadership and management, impacting negatively on children's experiences.

Staff shared that they have previously not felt well supported by leaders and managers and that this impacted on staff morale. Under previous management, staff did not receive regular or effective supervision. There was a lack of support and guidance from leaders and managers.

Leaders and managers have not had robust or effective oversight of the home. Incidents have been reviewed with a lack of consideration for the wider planning and support for children. Learning has not been taken from incidents and used to improve practice and the support provided to children.

Managers have not strongly advocated for children and given sufficient challenge to external professionals. For one child, there was a lack of clarity about their longer-term care plan and where they would be living. Managers did not challenge the placing authority effectively, which impacted on this child's ability to settle and invest in the home.

The current home manager is motivated, child-focused and well regarded by her staff team. She has a good understanding of the strengths of the home and areas for development. Both the manager and responsible individual have acknowledged and reflected on previous shortfalls and have begun to take action to address these.

The current manager has developed effective monitoring systems to assist her oversight of the home. Issues around staff practice have been identified quickly and action has been taken to address these, with additional support or training provided as needed. There has been a noticeable improvement to this in the past three months. Supervision has improved and is now reflective and of good quality, with learning from incidents clearly documented.

Detailed guidance is now in place for staff on how best to support children. This includes clear expectations in terms of routines and boundaries within the home. Staff report now feeling well supported and that managers are approachable and visible within the home.

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
Restraint in relation to a child is only permitted for the purpose of preventing— injury to any person (including the child); serious damage to the property of any person (including the child). Restraint in relation to a child must be necessary and proportionate. (Regulation 20 (1)(a)(b) (2))	1 May 2024
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans; seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs; if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans; and seek to develop and maintain effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children's home is to provide care and accommodation. (Regulation 5 (a)(b)(c)(d))	1 May 2024
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on—	1 May 2024

mutual respect and trust;

an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and

positive responses to other children and adults.

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—

that staff—

meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans;

help each child to develop socially aware behaviour;

encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding;

help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone;

communicate to each child expectations about the child's behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding;

strive to gain each child's respect and trust;

understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children;

are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same;

de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children.

(Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(viii) (ix)(x)(xi))

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that procedures in place for when a child goes missing from home contain clear and unambiguous guidance for staff and that any risks specific to the location of the home are considered within this. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.28)

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: SC478152

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Phoenix Learning & Care Holdings Limited

Registered provider address: Support Hub, Unit 5, Chinon Court, Lower Moor Way, Tiverton, Devon EX16 6SS

Responsible individual: Rebecca Jones

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Janet Jauregui, Social Care Inspector

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