

1229977

Registered provider: Oxfordshire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a children's home run by a local authority. It provides care and accommodation for up to six children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home provides short-term care and accommodation, which may be on a shared-care basis, aimed at preventing a family breakdown. It also accommodates children while assessments of their longer-term placement needs are carried out. The home does not offer long-term placements. The home provides an emergency bed.

Inspection dates: 4 to 5 October 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account requires improvement to be good

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers requires improvement to be good

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: 11 May 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None.

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home requires improvement to be good because:

- Not all of the risks that children pose to themselves and others have been assessed and planned for.
- Some records are not accurate, kept up to date or accessible to children.
- The location of the home is not reviewed on an annual basis.
- There is not always a person on duty who has a suitable first aid qualification.
- Some staff are not up to date with their training.
- Individualised strategies are not developed to minimise the risk of a child going missing.
- It is not clear from the records of key-work sessions how staff support, advise and guide children.
- The bullying policy that children sign is not easy for them to understand.
- Some aspects of a complaint made by a child were not investigated.
- The monitoring systems failed to identify the shortfalls found at this inspection.

The children's home's strengths:

- Children and parents feel welcome at the home.
- Children's behaviour has improved significantly.
- Children attend school or college, and are interested in doing well in their education.
- Children have interesting activities to do during the periods of time they spend in the home.
- Work with parents and children improves family relationships, and means that some children return to live with their families.
- Staff know children well.
- Staff show a strong commitment to making sure that children get the best out of their stays in the home.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
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11/05/2017

Full

Inadequate

16/02/2017

Full

Requires improvement

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
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff—</p> <p>(i) 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;</p> <p>(v) understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12(1)(i)(v))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that: all known risks are assessed; staff are aware of all the risks to each child; clear strategies are developed.</p>	24/11/2017
<p>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; are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. In particular, ensure that all information that staff need to care for a child effectively is accurate, up to date and easily accessible to staff and children. (Regulation 36(1)(a)(b)(c)).</p> <p>In particular, ensure that all information that staff need to care for a child effectively is accurate, up to date and easily accessible to staff and children.</p>	24/11/2017
<p>The registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children's home at least once in each calendar year, taking into account the requirement in regulation 12(2)(c) (the protection of children standard). When conducting the review, the registered person must consult, and take into account the views of, each relevant person. (Regulation 46(1)(2))</p>	24/11/2017

<p>The registered person must ensure that— at all times, at least one person on duty at the home has a suitable first aid qualification. (Regulation 31(1)(2)(a))</p>	<p>24/11/2017</p>
<p>13.—(1) The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children’s home that— (a) helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and (b) promotes their welfare. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— (h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13(1)(2)(a)(b)(h)).</p> <p>In particular, further develop the monitoring and quality assurance systems.</p>	<p>24/11/2017</p>
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees— (a) undertake appropriate continuing professional development (Regulation 33(4)(a)).</p> <p>In particular, ensure that each staff member attends training or updates to training in a timely way.</p>	<p>24/11/2017</p>

Recommendations

- Where there is a possibility that a child will run away or go missing from a children’s home placement, their placement plan should include a strategy to minimise this risk. If the child is looked after, their care plan (arranged by their placing authority) should include such a strategy. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 45, paragraph 9.24).

- Appropriately support children throughout their care and give them opportunities to discuss the impact of their care, or any changes that they feel might need to be made to it. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 18, paragraph 3.31).

In particular, ensure that records of key work sessions with children show in what way support, advice or guidance has been given to them,

- Expectations of standards of behaviour should be high for all staff and children in the home. These standards should be clear and unambiguous (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 39, paragraph 8.11).

In particular, ensure that agreements relating to anti-bullying that children sign

up to are easy to understand and written in plain English.

- Children must be consulted regularly on their views about the home's care, to inform and support continued improvement in the quality of care provided. Due consideration should be given to the child's cognitive ability in the development and implementation of any consultation processes. Children should be able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted upon ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11).

In particular, ensure that all elements of a complaint made by a child are investigated and that the outcome is fed back to the child.

Inspection judgements

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

Children coming to stay in the home are welcomed and helped to settle well. The children present during the inspection had good relationships with each other.

Staff spend good-quality time with each child, and are interested in them and their needs. Children really appreciate and value the care and support given to them. Children have developed very good relationships with staff.

Children's behaviour has improved significantly during their time staying in the home. Children are making safer decisions about their actions and their future lives. The routines in the home help to give structure and certainty to their lives.

Children say that staff listen to them and hear their views. However, a complaint made by a child took a long time to investigate and the investigation did not cover all aspects of the complaint. This means that children may not feel that their views are seen as important.

Children's health needs are primarily the responsibility of their parents. However, staff understand children's basic health needs, such as ensuring that medicines are given at the correct time, and they cater for these needs adequately. The clinical team provides specialist support for children's placements. The team supports staff to consider the appropriateness of admissions, and to develop and review individual care plans. The child and adolescent mental health services also work with some of the children to improve their mental health. Staff work well with these professionals.

Children, even those who had not been attending school, are now engaging in

education. Children's self-esteem and confidence in their abilities are increasing. Children are developing a greater interest in raising their aspirations for their futures. These are very positive improvements.

Children keep busy during their time in the home. They take part in a range of activities that are of interest to them. For example, children use the art and craft materials to develop their dexterity or the outdoor equipment to burn off energy. Children also take part in the usual range of planned activities in the community, such as swimming, to help them keep fit. To broaden the children's horizons, staff have also arranged visits to places further afield. For example, a child visited his chosen place of interest, Madame Tussauds in London, and the endurance skills of two children were tested when they took part in a 40-mile canoe trip during a summer camp.

As children do not live in the home on a full-time basis, the scope for staff to support them to make significant progress in developing their independence skills is limited. However, children have developed some skills in cooking and doing their own washing. Staff have also supported one child to write a curriculum vitae to improve his employment opportunities.

The work undertaken by staff to support children and their parents to improve their relationships has been successful for some children, for whom a move home is now a realistic proposition. A child said, 'They have changed mine and my family's life. I don't know what we would have done without them.'

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

Children feel safe when they come to stay in the home. They trust staff and confide in them.

Staff and managers have failed to include all known risks in the risk assessment for one child. A number of strategies for minimising risks to the child are vague. These strategies consist of instructions for staff such as 'reinforce boundaries', with no description of what these specific boundaries are. For some children, risk assessments are not linked to a behaviour management plan. These shortfalls are mitigated to some extent by staff knowing each child quite well. However, staff were not aware of all of the risks posed by, or to, one child. There were no individual assessments or plans regarding what staff should do to prevent a child going missing or the actions to take should this happen.

Despite the lack of information for staff about risk management, there has been a significant decrease in the frequency of children taking unplanned risks. For example, children who used to go missing have not done so since staying in the home and they are no longer at risk from exploitation. Children are developing verbal reasoning skills and, as a result, their anger and aggression are reducing. There have been no incidents of physical restraint, sanctions or bullying since the last inspection.

There have been no issues of a safeguarding nature since the last inspection. Staff are aware of how to deal with issues of a safeguarding nature, and are confident about how to respond to these.

A risk assessment of the location of the home is in place, although this has not been reviewed on an annual basis.

Safe recruitment processes help to reduce the risk that an unsuitable person may be employed to work with the children.

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

The leadership and management team has worked hard to address the shortfalls found at the last inspection. They have met all but one requirement; this relates to developing and implementing a recording system that is fit for purpose. Deficits found during this inspection include records not being completed and not being signed and dated. A new system was due to be implemented soon after this inspection. This requirement has been repeated, and will be further assessed at the next inspection.

Three recommendations have not been met, and have been repeated. These relate to: ensuring that children understand the bullying policy; the quality of the recording of key-work sessions; and ensuring that there is a member of staff on duty at all times who is first aid trained. A requirement has been made regarding this last issue.

Systems for monitoring the improvement work carried out in the home are in place, but they have failed to identify the shortfalls found during this inspection.

The improvements children have made in their lives have been enhanced through the good relationships staff have with parents and with professionals who are working with the children.

Staff are committed to providing the best possible service for children. They are child focused in their work. Staff are supported in their role by regular supervision, team meetings and peer support. A workforce development plan is in place, but for some staff, training is overdue; others have not undertaken some of the key training.

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: 1229977

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Oxfordshire County Council, County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND

Responsible individual: Matthew Edwards

Registered manager: Paul Jacobs

Inspectors:

Rosie Dancer: social care inspector

Amanda Harvey: social care inspector

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