

1244426

Registered provider: Oxfordshire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is 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 on a shared care basis for a period of assessment.

Inspection dates: 28 to 30 November 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:

Overall judgement at last inspection: Not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

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

- Risk assessments do not include an individualised review of restrictive practices or specific safety measures for staff to follow to safeguard young people.
- Young people's complaints are not recognised as such. Managers have not consulted young people as part of the review of the children's guide.
- There was a delay in notifying Ofsted in relation to a safeguarding concern.
- Staff and placing authorities are not consulted and their views are not included in the six-monthly quality of care review. Staff's engagement with parents is inconsistent.
- Supervision is not occurring monthly as outlined in the organisation's policy.
- The bullying policy is difficult for young people to understand. Staff do not implement rules and expectations regarding young people smoking.
- Monitoring processes have failed to identify the shortfalls above.

The children's home's strengths

- Interactions between staff and young people are positive. Young people enjoy good relationships with staff and each other.
- Some young people give positive feedback about the impact that staff have had on their lives.
- Managers investigate incidents well and implement lessons learned from this.

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
<p>In order to meet the children's views, wishes and feelings standard the registered person must ensure that staff—</p> <p>ensure that each child—</p> <p>is enabled to provide feedback to, and raise issues with, a relevant person about the support and services that the child receives;</p> <p>keep the children's guide and the home's complaints procedure under review and seek children's comments before revising either document. (Regulation 7(b)(i)(c))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that complaints by young people are recognised as such.</p>	09/02/2018
<p>In order to meet the leadership and management standard, the registered person must—</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13(h))</p>	09/02/2018
<p>If there is a referral of a person working in the home pursuant to section 35 (Regulated activity providers: duty to refer) of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (33), the registered person must without delay notify—</p> <p>HMCI.</p> <p>(Regulation 40(3)(a))</p>	09/02/2018
<p>The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ('a quality of care review') at least once every six months.</p> <p>The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45(5))</p>	09/02/2018

Recommendations

- It is crucial that the home works in close partnership with all those who play a role in protecting and caring for the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 11, paragraph 2.3) In particular, give timely feedback to parents.
- Just as in a family home, children should be able to access all shared areas of their home unless there are specific reasons why this should not meet a child's needs. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10) In particular, ensure that locking doors to communal areas are justified in risk assessments for each child.
- Children's home staff should encourage children to take a proactive role in looking after their day-to-day health and well-being. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 34, paragraph 7.10) In particular, ensure consistent and helpful staff responses to children smoking.
- 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 anti-bullying agreements with children are consistent and easy for young people to understand.
- Staff should continually and actively assess the risk to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. Where there are safeguarding concerns for a child, a plan agreed between the home and their placing authority must include details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risk on a day-to-day basis. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- A record of supervision should be kept for staff, including the manager. The record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with regulation. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)

Inspection judgements

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

Young people spoken to say that staff do not listen to them or respond to their requests. Comments recorded in a communication book were not recognised as a complaint. Staff failed to respond to this in a formal way. This was a missed opportunity to fully investigate the matter and report findings to the young people.

Young people are, however, able to exercise choice during their daily routines. Young people's meetings enable them to contribute to meal planning, choose activities and express their views.

A bullying policy, signed by young people, is not written in a child-friendly way. However, the children's guide includes information about bullying in an easy-to-read format. This lack of consistency is confusing. Staff have updated the children's guide without young people contributing to any changes. They have not been encouraged to take an active role in the review of this document.

Regular key-working sessions are held. However, recording is inconsistent. There was a good example of engagement with one young person. Tools used helped him to develop strategies to manage his anxiety. Some key-work practice is thoughtful and successful. However, other key-working sessions do not evidence staff working with the young people to help them to achieve the agreed outcomes.

Young people develop good relationships with each other. The staff were observed to have positive relationships with the young people and engage well with them during the inspection. A large number of staff have left and new staff have been recruited. This has been disruptive to the aims and ethos of the home. One young person said, 'All the best staff have left.' The experiences of young people are mixed. Some young people did not engage with the assessment process and stopped attending after a short period; other young people have had a more positive experience. One young person who has left the home wrote a poem to the registered manager thanking her for the difference staying in the home has made to his life.

Staff recognise that engaging young people in assessments and interventions can be challenging. They respond creatively by involving young people in projects that encourage opportunities to connect with staff. One young person has helped to build a shed for the home's chickens; another young person is helping staff to build a tepee.

All the young people are attending education. Staff work closely with teaching staff to ensure that they work to the agreed outcomes. There is a multi-disciplinary approach to the care given to young people. Staff work with young people's families in the community as well as in the home to ensure that strategies that are effective are mirrored in the family environment. The team includes a clinical psychologist who has consultations with staff. Professional support is readily available to staff.

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

Risk assessments about safeguarding issues are completed to an inconsistent standard and do not identify the specific safety measures needed by staff to keep young people safe. The risks to young people are reduced due to the manager's monitoring of daily records to ensure a swift response should any difficulties arise. The registered manager informs the designated officer if safeguarding issues arise in the home. Thorough internal investigations and liaison with the local authority have occurred and action plans have been agreed. More detail of how staff should adhere to the action plans in practice would enhance this process.

Staff have a good knowledge of e-safety. Staff devise written agreements and restrictions regarding young people's use of mobile phones with parents and young people prior to the young people staying here. However, there is not a clear plan of action should a young person not adhere to the agreement.

Easy-to-read risk assessment tools ensure that staff are aware of the risks that young people pose towards each other. However, staff did not update a risk assessment following a recent issue being identified. This was a known risk that re-surfaced. The opportunity to agree a safety plan to minimise the risk to the young person and others was missed.

Young people rarely go missing. When they do, staff follow them and attempt to locate them. They ensure that young people are welcomed back to the home on their return. However, staff did not record the outcome and actions taken following a young person going missing. Analysis of his return interview and details of any lessons learned were not available.

Managers locked doors to communal rooms following a recent incident. This restrictive measure has not been subject to individual risk assessment for each young person. This outcome is that some young people have had their movement in the home restricted unnecessarily.

Staff are proactive in supporting young people to manage their behaviour. There are clear behaviour management plans with strategies to manage challenging behaviour. Staff are trained in the home's preferred behaviour management approach. As a result, they have not had to use physical interventions.

Managers ensure a swift response to some practice issues relating to young people's health. For example, managers reviewed processes and improved practice following a medication error and in response to a situation when staff needed to seek medical support. An internal investigation identified some practice issues, which staff effectively implemented following subsequent incidents.

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

The home is purpose built and this is the first full inspection. The registered manager has the necessary experience and qualifications to manage the home. An assistant manager, who has a good understanding of the young people's needs, supports her. There have been a high turnover of staff and some staffing shortages, which have impacted on the daily running of the service. An action plan and analysis of staffing issues have not been undertaken to evaluate the impact on the service, the staff and the young people.

The manager has undertaken a six-monthly review of the service. This record includes descriptive, sensitive information. Social worker and parent feedback has not been included, which missed an opportunity to consult with stakeholders. However, the registered manager has devised other methods to consult with staff and collate social work feedback. Stakeholder and staff directly inputting into this monitoring process would ensure that it is more meaningful.

Generally, safeguarding notifications are reported to external professionals in a timely manner. Good relationships exist with the designated officer. On one occasion there was a delay in notifying Ofsted of a safeguarding issue. This compromised the ability for external professionals to oversee actions taken to protect young people on this occasion. The location risk assessment has not been reviewed annually. It is in the process of being updated; however, monitoring processes did not identify this delay.

Leaders and managers have developed positive relationships with some stakeholders. Feedback is mixed. An independent reviewing officer reported, 'The young person is supported to engage in meaningful interventions.' A social worker said, 'I have always found staff to be professional, committed and passionate.' However, the social worker expressed concern about the support for parents: 'Some policies don't seem to complement the requests for parents to implement positive parenting strategies.' One parent said, 'They manage my daughter okay; they can calm her and reassure her.' However, another parent reported that staff did not inform her about a recent incident.

Supervision is evaluative and young people's care and outcomes are central to discussions. Staff discuss young people's needs and reflect on practice and the impact on young people. Supervision is monthly; however, there are some months when supervisions have not been undertaken for some staff, including the registered manager. This means that they have not had the opportunity to meet with their managers formally or in line with the stated policy.

The home has a no smoking policy and smoking cessation services are offered to young people. However, staff are aware that young people smoke and do not prevent this. Clear, agreed rules and expectations are not in place with young people and parents for this issue.

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: 1244426

Provision sub-type: Children's home

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

Responsible individual: Daniel Ruaux

Registered manager: Sandra Curley

Inspector

Suzy Lemmy, social care inspector

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