

SC032058

Registered provider: Buckinghamshire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and operated by Buckinghamshire County Council and provides residential care for up to six young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 13 to 14 December 2017

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected inadequate

The effectiveness of leaders and managers inadequate

There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and/or the care and experiences of children and young people are poor and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 15 September 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: Good

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is inadequate because:

- Senior managers have made decisions for young people to be placed in the home without the agreement of the registered manager, when staff have insufficient information about them, or insufficient skills, to work effectively with them.
- Young people said that they sometimes feel unsafe living in this home because of bullying, or physical violence from other young people to them, or to staff.
- Staff are ineffective in setting boundaries for young people, and a culture of smoking cigarettes and cannabis has developed in the home.
- Risk assessments are incomplete and do not give staff sufficient guidance on how to respond to, or reduce, risks arising from young people's behaviour.
- Most of the young people have poor engagement in education and they have low aspirations for the future.

The children's home's strengths:

- Damages to the children's home are promptly repaired.
- The manager and the staff recognise the weaknesses identified in this inspection and the changes that are needed.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/09/2016	Full	Good
25/01/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
26/08/2015	Full	Good
09/02/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness

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>11. The positive relationship standard</p> <p>In order to meet the positive relationship standard, the registered person must ensure that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) mutual respect and trust (b) an understanding about acceptable behaviour (c) positive responses to other children and adults. <p>(Regulation 11(1)(a)(b)(c))</p>	3/02/2018
<p>12. The protection of children standard</p> <p>In order to meet the protection of children standard, the registered person must ensure that staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (2)(a)(i) assess whether each child is at risk for 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 (ii) help each child to understand how to keep safe (iii) have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm (iv) manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other (vi) take effective action whenever there is a concern about a child's welfare. <p>(Regulation 12(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(vi))</p>	3/02/2018
<p>13. The leadership and management standard</p> <p>In order to meet the leadership and management standard, the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1)(a) helps children aspire to fulfil their potential (2)(c) ensure that staff have experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child (f) understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experience of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of quality 	3/02/2018

of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13(1)(a)(2)(c)(f))	
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard the registered person is required to: (2)(d) ensure the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child. (Regulation 12(2)(d))	3/02/2018
14. The care planning standard In order to meet the care planning standard the registered manager is required to ensure: 2(a) 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 statement of purpose. (Regulation 14(2)(a))	3/02/2018
The registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner, which is consistent with its statement of purpose. (Regulation 16(1)((5))	3/02/2018

Recommendations

- Staff should be skilled in understanding the range of influences that friendships can have and should encourage those with a positive impact and discourage those with a negative impact. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 36, paragraph 8.8)
- The registered manager should monitor and review the patterns and trends of turnover of staff, whether agency or directly employed, and be able to understand and, where possible, address any negative trends. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.19)
- The registered person should only accept placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs as recorded in the child's relevant plans and where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Over the last six months, the stability of the home has been badly affected by young people being admitted, sometimes in an emergency, about whom staff have very little information or about how to meet their needs. In some instances, young people have been admitted to the home when the registered manager has considered that it is not a suitable placement to meet their needs. Several young people's placements have come to an unplanned ending as a result of staff being unable to meet their needs. Young people living in the home have complained to the manager about the impact of such emergency placements on them.

Relationships between staff and young people are weak. Staff have been unable to assert firm boundaries or to help young people make good decisions, for example in discouraging them from developing relationships that may not be in their best interests.

Care arrangements are inconsistent, and this has been aggravated by staff turnover. The use of agency staff instead of permanent staff to provide one-to-one supervision for some young people has resulted in complaints and concerns from professionals.

Staff are ill equipped to meet some young people's health needs and have not been given advice or training on how to meet one young person's emerging needs, or how best to communicate with a young person at times of mental health crisis.

Staff have been unable to influence young people's engagement and attendance in education. Most young people have low attendance and little aspiration. A small percentage of young people are attending education and receiving alternative support.

Evenings lack structure, and young people are not kept busy or provided with meaningful and purposeful activities, to develop their confidence and social skills. This has resulted in increased opportunities for engagement in negative behaviours outside the home.

The manager does identify and arrange for prompt repair of any damage caused to the home by the young people. Several rooms have been freshly painted in bright colours to make the home appealing to the young people.

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

Young people said that they have sometimes felt unsafe while living in the home because of bullying or physical aggression from other young people towards them or towards staff. Staff have been unable to manage this behaviour in order to make young people feel safe.

Not all young people have comprehensive risk assessments in place. Some assessments have not been regularly reviewed, contain inaccurate assessments of risk and do not

contain careful and measured responses. The risk assessments do not provide staff with sufficient information on how to protect some young people.

The quality of work undertaken with young people that are at risk of self-harm is not thorough, and risks to them remain high. The behaviour is not fully understood by the staff; therefore, they cannot assist the young people to develop an awareness of their behaviour and prevent further incidents.

Staff do not sufficiently challenge young people smoking cigarettes or cannabis, and this behaviour has become a culture of the home.

Young people go missing frequently. The incidents are handled reasonably well by the staff. They follow the home's missing from care policy and report young people missing when their whereabouts are unknown. Some of these incidents could have been avoided if the staff engagement with young people had been better.

The staff have good relationships with the police despite their attending the home on numerous occasions to intervene when young people have been considered unmanageable.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Since the last inspection, senior managers have placed young people in the home, despite opposition from the registered manager. No consideration was given to the staff ability to meet individual needs and the impact on the other young people already in placement. In these situations, the manager's concerns were ignored, resulting in him feeling undermined in his duties.

There has been inconsistent senior management involvement with the home. The manager has seen four changes to the person responsible for overseeing his practice, which has hindered his development. Despite being appointed over a year ago, the manager has yet to achieve the appropriate qualification to manage a children's home.

Staff are committed, but their morale is low. The staff described feeling exhausted and emotionally drained. Supervision and training have not been effective in developing their skills to enable them to work effectively in the challenging circumstances they have faced.

Several documents including some daily logs were not up to date. Information regarding the young people was slow to be provided by the manager. The quality of record-keeping is poor and this does not leave a sufficient trail for the manager to monitor.

External monitoring of the home is weak. The reports submitted by the independent person are not evaluative; nor do they offer a true reflection of the daily life of the young people. The management was unable to identify trends and patterns in the service without substantial input from an external source.

The home is not currently operating in line with its statement of purpose. The help and assistance referenced for young people are not being consistently provided; nor does the statement of purpose highlight how the complex needs of the young people will be addressed in emergency situations.

The majority of the key professional contacts are accessible for consultation, but this is not routinely achieved.

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: SC032058

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Chief Officer, County Hall, Walton Street, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP20 1UA

Responsible individual: Janet Simon

Registered manager: David Knowles

Inspector

James Harmon, social care inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2018