

# 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 local authority-run home, which is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to six children. It provides a residential experience for children needing accommodation for a period of assessment and for those requiring shared care. Children and families may also receive community support from the home.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since October 2018.

**Inspection dates:** 28 to 29 October 2019

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 20 March 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** improved effectiveness

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>Inspection type</b>	<b>Inspection judgement</b>
20/03/2019	Interim	Improved effectiveness
23/07/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good
17/01/2018	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
04/10/2017	Full	Requires improvement to be good

## 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. 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. (Regulation 12 (2)(a)(1))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that children accommodated in the home are routinely subject to detailed risk assessments that detail their progress in keeping safe.</p>	<p>01/01/2020</p>

### Recommendations

- The registered person should agree with their local police force, procedures and guidance on police involvement with the home to reduce unnecessary police involvement in managing behaviour and criminalisation of behaviours. Children should not be charged with offences resulting from behaviour within a children’s home that would not similarly lead to police involvement if it occurred in a family home. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 47, paragraph 9.40)
- Any individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person must make a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home’s arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home’s care. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 65, paragraph 15.5)

In particular, ensure that routine and detailed risk assessments are carried out to determine young people’s progress on becoming safe.

## Inspection judgements

### Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people strongly benefit from receiving highly individualised care from skilled staff. This nurturing care enables the young people to make very good progress across key areas in their lives. As one young person said, 'The best thing about being here is the people who look after us.'

Staff are adept at building good relationships with the young people. They enjoy having fun together playing favourite games, and staff take great pride in the young people developing new skills. Staff want the best for the young people and persevere with new challenges until they find a positive way forward.

As a short-term provision, the work here is highly focused on assessing and moving the young people on to the best option to meet their needs. Staff use their strong relationship skills well to forge trusting links, particularly with the young people's birth families. This helps to sustain sometimes fragile bonds and build resilience in the young people and their birth families.

All the young people now have good attendance at education, even though this may not have been the case when they joined the home. Young people's sense of well-being is improved, and this is reflected in their general presentation, better sleeping and eating patterns and involvement in active pursuits. Overall, the young people are less stressed and so not as prone to angry outbursts and causing property damage.

Staff and managers place great value on listening to and acting on the young people's views. The memory wall in the home was suggested by a young person who was leaving, and the small, cosy, quiet room was inspired by another. A further young person has made a strong contribution to the children's guide, helpfully sharing her experiences of joining the home.

On non-education days, staff join the young people in their chosen activities of swimming or playing golf or visiting local attractions. Sometimes, the young people prefer to be around the home, maybe cooking or watching a film with staff or having a pamper session. It is apparent that the young people love having staff listening to and talking with them, and this means that there are also valuable opportunities for staff to work with the young people on sensitive and painful issues.

Young people's experiences of leaving the home are usually carefully planned. Memory sharing and celebrations of the time spent together always form an important part of this ending. The pace of moving on is individualised, and if needed the transition process can be gradual and involve a pattern of increasing visits and stays away.

## **How well children and young people are helped and protected: good**

Young people are now much less likely to be involved in risky behaviour. For example, substance misuse is much reduced, as is becoming involved in violent confrontations. Another young person's self-harm pattern has significantly reduced both in intensity and frequency. This means that young people are both more protected from harm and learning how to live more safely.

Risk assessments that are completed prior to admission are sound and useful documents, as are those produced in response to a specific crisis. However, there is not a regularly updated document for each young person detailing their vulnerabilities and the strategies to approach these. This means that assessing a young person's detailed progress over time is not straightforward.

The young people currently living in the home do not go missing from it. However, in the recent past, some young people did routinely go missing. This was effectively dealt with by an individualised response to the behaviour, dependent on the risks presented, leading to a reduction in this very risky behaviour.

A young person said that the way staff treat them is 'fair', and another young person said, 'Staff treat you as equal to other people.' This trust in the staff is further demonstrated by the low incidence of physical restraint and of sanctions. In addition, the police are only occasionally called to this home to help manage behaviour, but mutual expectations on these occasions could be more explicit.

Staff and managers have a thoughtful and personalised approach to approaching behavioural challenges. They usually confidently implement a restorative and natural consequences approach, but if there is a safeguarding issue they do not hesitate to devise effective safety plans and will work with others to pursue necessary legal solutions.

The staff have effective links with the designated officer for safeguarding and specialist safeguarding teams. For example, vulnerable young people joining the home are assessed by the specialist child sexual exploitation team using their screening tool. This helps to keep the young people safe by ensuring that any necessary protective measures can be implemented immediately.

## **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The home is led by a highly effective manager, who has been registered since 2018 and is actively working on the appropriate qualification. She is ably supported by a competent and experienced management team. Staff have great confidence in their managers and their leadership, and, as a staff member said, 'The management team [members] all have different main skills and complement each other really well.'

The management team has excellent knowledge of the young people, their plans and progress. This is mainly achieved through direct contact, constant discussion and problem-solving with staff and meetings. There is also a substantial, overview monitoring system that is routinely completed and internally assessed.

External monitoring through the independent visitor is routinely completed. However, there have been different visitors over the last year, and the quality of the reports has been variable. These factors both limit the effectiveness of the visitor as an independent resource for the young people and the effectiveness of the reports as a useful management tool.

The registered manager completes clear and thorough regulation 45 reports and development plans. These reflective tasks, combined with her strong knowledge of her home, help to improve staff practice for the young people. For example, the management team noted a practice issue that fell below their high standards. Using both discussion and modelling, they changed routine procedures to ensure more positive outcomes for the young people.

The home's physical environment is maintained to a high standard, and its furniture and fittings are comfortable and meet the young people's needs well. Young people were involved in various aspects of the development of the home, for example the popular cinema room. They are proud of their home, and, as one young person said, 'It's a really nice place and that makes you feel good.'

The staff team has strong and effective working relationships with a range of voluntary and statutory agencies. Those contacted were unanimous in praising what one described as the home's 'open communication with other agencies', including challenge where necessary. These strong working-in-partnership skills benefit the young people by providing them with a wider range of options to help them.

## 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:** Oxfordshire County Council

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

**Responsible individual:** Daniel Ruaux

**Registered manager:** Catherine Partlett

## Inspector

Bridget Goddard, 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 children looked after, 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2019