

# SC361167

**Options Autism (5) Limited**

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## **Information about this children's home**

The service provides a structured environment specially designed to meet the needs of children and young people with autism spectrum conditions (ASC). The children and young people may also have additional medical and/or complex needs.

This setting is an independent residential special school registered as a children's home. It is owned and operated by a private company. The service offers specialised education, care and accommodation for up to 22 children, including up to three children and young people under short-break arrangements. Some young people stay until they have completed their education at 19.

The home has been without a registered manager since November 2020.

**Inspection date:** 4 February 2021

## **This monitoring visit**

This setting was last inspected in October 2019. This monitoring visit was carried out to enable the regulator to obtain an up-to-date assessment of the effectiveness of the leadership of the home and the lived experiences of children since the last inspection.

Due to the COVID 19 (coronavirus) pandemic, the monitoring visit was completed remotely.

Eighteen children live at the setting across four separate houses. Each house has between one and seven children living there. Due to the needs of the individual children, there is a high staff-to-child ratio.

Since the last inspection, there has been a change of manager at the home. The

previous manager left in November 2020 and a new manager is now in post. The new manager was previously the deputy manager, so knows the home and children well.

Most of the children attend the on-site school, which has remained open despite the COVID-19 pandemic. This has provided children with a level of stability and familiarity.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, staff have tried to maintain children's routines. Staff have utilised the on-site facilities such as sensory rooms and outside play areas. Staff have also helped children to explore the extensive grounds, which include a forest school area and farm. This has helped children maintain a sense of normality at a time that has been confusing for them.

Some children have had to isolate in the home due to testing positive for COVID-19. During this time, a child became anxious because he was unable to access a play area he was familiar with because it was restricted. As a result, the child managed to climb an anti-climb fence. The child fell and sustained an injury. Although remedial action has been taken, the potential for children to climb the fence remains. As such, there is an ongoing risk for children to come to harm.

The COVID-19 pandemic has meant children have not always been able to see their families as they would normally do. When visits have not been possible staff have used technology to make sure children can still talk to and see their families. This has been invaluable in maintaining family links and reassuring families their child is safe and well.

Managers have responded appropriately to concerns and complaints. When allegations have been raised, these have been reported to the relevant agencies and investigated.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the home has relied on agency staff to support permanent staff in caring for children. However, agency staff do not receive supervision or mandatory training to equip them with the same skills and knowledge as permanent staff members. As a result, children do not always receive the same standard of care.

Children's plans often lack detail to assist staff in meeting the needs of children. Gaps include how staff should use children's communication systems or manage their behaviours. This impacts how well staff support children when they are upset and anxious.

The manager's oversight of the care provided to children has not always been effective. This means that there are missed opportunities to identify and address required improvements in staff practice.

The home's statement of purpose does not provide a full staff list which includes levels of experience and qualifications. This administrative error is reflective of the variable quality of case recording and documentation in the home.

The manager has met one of the two requirements raised at the last inspection. Regulation 13 (the leadership and management standard) has been repeated following this monitoring visit. In addition, four recommendations and two requirements have been raised under regulation 11 (the positive relationships standard) and regulation 12 (the protection of children standard).

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/10/2019	Full	Good
27/06/2018	Full	Good
14/11/2017	Full	Good
16/03/2017	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>The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on—</p> <p>mutual respect and trust;</p> <p>an understanding about acceptable behaviour.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(i))</p>	12 March 2021
<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—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>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>that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(d))</p>	12 March 2021
<p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p>	12 March 2021

helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and  
promotes their welfare.

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

ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child.  
(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c))

## Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the statement of purpose includes the staffing structure, including the experience and qualifications of all staff. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.10)
- The registered person should ensure that they 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 ensure that they are skilled in anticipating difficulties and reviewing incidents, such as learning from disruptions and placement breakdowns. They are responsible for proactively implementing lessons learned and sustaining good practice. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- The registered person should ensure that they have systems in place so that all staff, including agency staff, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)

## Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the children's home since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

## **Children's home details**

**Unique reference number:** SC361167

**Provision sub-type:** Residential special school

**Registered provider:** Options Autism (5) Limited

**Registered provider address:** Turnpike Gate House, Alcester Heath, Alcester,  
Warwickshire B49 5JG

**Responsible individual:** Anne Adams

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

## **Inspectors**

Michelle Spruce, Social Care Inspector  
Debbie Bond, Social Care Inspector

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