

1275569

Registered provider: The Mulberry Bush Organisation Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home provides care and accommodation for up to 31 children. It provides therapeutic care, treatment and education for children who have severe social, emotional and/or mental health difficulties.

The registered manager has been in post since June 2018.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 16 September 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on our website.

Inspection dates: 21 to 22 April 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 5 November 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: Not applicable.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/11/2019	Full	Outstanding
23/10/2018	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The community within the children's home has experienced a turbulent period when some of the children and some staff tested positive for COVID-19. Still, the children continued to receive exceptional levels of help and care from a dedicated adult team.

The integrated team approach between therapy, education and group living is exemplary. The children's individual therapeutic needs are identified and well catered for. As a result, the children make excellent progress and begin to build the foundations for future success.

One parent described the progress that her child had made as being 'life-changing for the family'. Another carer said that her child was like a different child since living at the home. This child's self-harming behaviours have reduced to a level where he can now safely stay in the family home and enjoy shared family activities. The developmental growth achieved by many of the children significantly improves and adds to the quality of their childhood.

A trauma-informed approach frames the adults' engagement with the children. Interactions are non-shaming, curious and warm. As a result, the children develop insight and skills to understand and better manage their feelings.

Adults are aware that the children can find change challenging. Life-story work and transitional preparation are integral to the children's care planning. Moves and changes are carefully planned and discussed with the children. Consequently, children experience less disruption and have less anxiety.

The organisation is committed to using an innovative research-informed form of practice, which focuses on building an understanding of the difference a therapeutic approach can make to both care and education. This benefits the children within the community and also benefits providers of care to traumatised children, and their families, in the wider society.

Adults ensure that the children receive consistent messages, encouragement and praise in support of their academic and social development. For children that were unable to attend school because of COVID-19, remote learning and outreach support were provided to ensure educational continuity.

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

Watchful adults foster an open safeguarding culture. Adults know what to do and who to inform if they have concerns about a child's well-being. This means that

incidents are shared with the correct agencies quickly, and actions are taken to ensure that the children are kept safe.

Children enjoy excellent relationships with the adults, who know the children very well. This serves as an added protective factor in helping the children to feel confident about speaking out regarding any worries they may have.

Children's plans set out clear guidance so that the adults know what helps the children if they are distressed or anxious. The adults ensure that the children's views are gathered after any incident. This helps to make sure that the children feel that they are safe, treated fairly and supported to reflect on the events around them.

Adults teach the children to name their feelings, and children learn new ways to cope with fear and difficult thoughts. Children recognise the progress they make. One child said that she still gets angry, but no longer damages her bedroom or belongings. She now enjoys her bedroom, and spending time in it, and it helps her to feel better.

Children have many platforms through which to have their views heard. Emphasis is placed on encouraging reflection, and discussing differences and dynamics within the group households. Adults help the children to learn how to treat others with respect. A restorative approach helps the children to develop empathy. This increases the children's understanding of what are, and are not, socially acceptable behaviours.

Children live in an environment that is sensitive to their identity, culture and family history. Adults ensure there is diverse representation in the form of pictures, books and toys. This sends an inclusive and welcoming message to the children. As a result, the children feel valued and encouraged to develop a positive self-identity.

During the night-time, the children are supported by the adults who sleep at the home. Alongside the adult presence overnight, there is an audio system and a closed-circuit television (CCTV) system. These are sited in the corridors outside the bedrooms. The systems temporarily record sounds and pictures. The use of CCTV and audio recording intends to offer extra safeguards to the children. However, the adults are not available to continually monitor images. Therefore, they are unable to take immediate action to safeguard children, if required. Moreover, surveillance as a default approach intrudes on the children's right to privacy.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager and the adults advocate well on behalf of the children. There is a good ratio of adults to care for the children and there is a long-standing core team. Children and their families trust the leaders and adults, and feel that they act in their best interests.

Leaders are actively invested in upholding and developing equality and inclusive practices throughout the community. The 'privilege and prejudice' weekly group is a

good example of this. This provides a safe forum for the adults to examine and challenge prejudice and discrimination. In turn, the whole community is strengthened by an inclusive environment that embraces difference and diversity.

The children's home is well resourced and child centred. However, the standard of maintenance is variable. In one child's bedroom, a window had been boarded up and had been left this way over the holiday break. The glass windowpane behind the board was not secure. This was addressed during the inspection. In other children's bedrooms, damage to the walls had not been quickly rectified.

The system of monitoring and prioritising maintenance requests is inconsistent. Ongoing plans for the oversight of maintenance, such as a senior management monthly walk-around, are now in place to ensure that a high-quality environment is consistently provided for the children.

The registered manager and responsible individual recognise the strengths of the service and areas for development. Inspectors were made aware during this inspection that some staff are unhappy with the senior leadership team's response to COVID-19. An internal review is currently being undertaken. Actions taken by the setting in response to the outbreak of COVID-19 in the community were considered alongside other evidence available at the time of the inspection, to inform inspectors' judgements.

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—</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)(d))</p> <p>This relates to the registered manager ensuring prompt action is taken to repair damage to the children's environment that may pose health and safety risks.</p> <p>This also relates to the registered manager ensuring that the environment is consistently maintained and furnished to a high standard.</p>	10 June 2021
<p>The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if—</p> <p>the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children;</p> <p>the monitoring or surveillance is no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child's need for privacy. (Regulation 24 (1)(a)(d))</p> <p>This relates to the registered manager ensuring that if CCTV or audio monitoring is used, staff will be available to continually monitor images in order to take immediate action to safeguard children.</p>	10 June 2021

<p>This also relates to the registered manager ensuring that groups of children are not the subjects of indiscriminate surveillance.</p>	
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Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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: 1275569

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: The Mulberry Bush Organisation Limited

Responsible individual: Lee Wright

Registered manager: Claire McCarthy

Inspectors

Anne-Marie Davies, Social Care Inspector
Jill Sephton-Wright, Social Care Inspector
Alphie Khumalo, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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