

1241840

Registered provider: Wessex College Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private provider and offers care and accommodation for up to four children and young people. The provider states in its statement of purpose that care is provided for children and young people with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties.

The registered manager's post is vacant. The previous registered manager left in January 2021. The current manager has submitted her application for registration to Ofsted.

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 2 December 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 15 to 16 June 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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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: 24 February 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: Sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/02/2020	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
24/09/2019	Full	Good
22/01/2019	Interim	Improved effectiveness
03/09/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

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

Outcomes for children are mixed. Some children have lived at the home for a long time and are making progress. One child has moved on to foster care in line with their plan. However, the staff have been unable to manage the behaviour of two children who therefore had to be moved from the home.

Until recently, the children were not making progress. There was a lack of leadership and routines in the home were not running smoothly. The newly appointed manager is providing leadership, she has restored order and is aspirational for the children. The home now has a calm and relaxed environment in which the children can thrive, feel safe and make progress.

The children benefit from being cared for by a staff team that knows them well. Relationships are positive and the children have adults they can talk to and who they trust. The children report that the home is much improved since the new manager arrived and that they like living at the home and are getting on well with each other.

The staff understand the healthcare needs of the children. However, healthcare plans lack detail. Children's dental and optician appointments are not documented and so it is not possible to see if they are up to date. A chronology of each child's health needs is not available, to understand and ensure that each child's identified healthcare needs are being met.

Children benefit from educational placements that are creatively tailored to meet their needs. The staff are aspirational for the children and encourage them to do well at school, in line with their future career plans. Two of the children have completed examinations and are waiting for their results. Both children know which further education college they will be attending after the holidays.

The staff support the children effectively to obtain part-time jobs and learn independence skills such as shopping, cooking and travelling independently. These skills will help the children in the future when they move out of the home.

The children enjoy seeing their families, with the support of the staff. Placing social workers comment positively about the willingness of the staff to take the children many miles to see their families. They say staff understand the importance and benefit of working to repair relationships between the children and their families.

Care plans detail the complex care needs of the children. However, the plans do not always contain creative strategies for the staff to use to maintain clear boundaries and routines. For example, children do not always eat meals with the adults in the dining room and often eat meals alone in their bedrooms.

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

Safeguarding procedures are effective. Incidents are promptly reported to the relevant safeguarding professionals. The manager has a positive working relationship with the police, youth offending team, prevent workers and social workers. This joint working helps to ensure the safety of the children. Professionals comment positively about the helpful information and communication that they receive from the home.

All children report that they feel safe living at the home and could name a member of staff that they could speak to if they feel unsafe or worried. Children are aware of how to make a complaint.

The staff are vigilant. The effective use of professional curiosity is evidenced in safeguarding records. Incidents of children going missing are reduced at the home and the use of restraint to manage behaviour is rare. If there is an incident, the manager promptly undertakes a comprehensive evaluation of the incident. Any learning is used to further understand the most effective way to support the children.

Children benefit from being kept safe, while being allowed to take assessed risks. For example, one child is being allowed to ride their bicycle to the nearest town and use public transport independently to visit his friends. Risk assessments offer the staff comprehensive control measures to manage identified risks.

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

The new manager has made a positive impact in the short time that she has been in post. She is supported effectively by senior leaders and managers from the new owners of the home. Management oversight is improved. Records are well managed and up to date. The staff and children comment very positively about her management of the home, how they feel supported and how the home is changing for the better.

The home provides the children with a generally homely and well-decorated environment. However, some areas of the home require decoration. Offensive graffiti is not always promptly removed. The empty bedroom of a child who recently moved out of the home has the appearance of a room that was not regularly cleaned and has an unpleasant odour. Plans are in place to refurbish this room and replace the flooring prior to a new child moving in.

The manager is knowledgeable about the strengths of the home and the areas for improvement. However, this information is not yet documented in a development plan for the home.

Leaders and managers have recruited new members of staff and ensure that the same adults work in the home, promoting consistency and stability. Prior to the new

manager arriving, the staff team was inconsistent and there was not a positive staff culture. The staff now report how they appreciate the positive and aspirational culture in the home.

The children are encouraged to offer their views and are included in the day-to-day running of the home. They participate in choosing furnishings and the decoration of the home. Their views are sought formally, in one-to-one meetings and house meetings, and informally, during journeys in the car with an adult from the home or during activities.

The staff working in the home are recruited in line with safe recruitment practice and procedures. However, a further reference check is not always obtained promptly when the original one cannot be obtained, in line with the home's recruitment policy.

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 health and well-being standard is that—</p> <p>the health and well-being needs of children are met;</p> <p>children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff help each child to—</p> <p>that each child has access to such dental, medical, nursing, psychiatric and psychological advice, treatment and other services as the child may require.</p> <p>(Regulation 10 (1)(b) (2)(a)(c))</p> <p>This specifically refers to children's healthcare needs and how these are to be met being documented in each child's healthcare plan.</p>	22 July 2021
<p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.</p> <p>The registered person may only—</p> <p>employ an individual to work at the children's home</p> <p>if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3).</p> <p>The requirements are that—</p> <p>full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2.</p> <p>(Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a) (3)(d))</p>	22 July 2021

<p>This particularly refers to ensuring that if it is not possible to obtain a specific reference for a potential member of staff, then an alternative reference is obtained as soon as possible.</p>	
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the home should seek, as far as possible, to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression; in particular that unnecessary signage is removed, obscene graffiti is removed as soon as possible and that children's bedrooms are kept clean and tidy. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that expectations of standards of behaviour should be high for all staff and children in the home. Positive behaviour and relationships should be reinforced, praised and encouraged. Poor behaviour should be challenged and discussed. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.11)
In particular, that children should regularly eat meals with adults at the dining table, not in their bedrooms, and that rules and boundaries are always consistent.
- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring to ensure continuous improvement. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24, page 55)
In particular, the registered person should ensure that the home has a current development plan that documents the strengths of the home and the areas for improvement and how this will be achieved.

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: 1241840

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Wessex College Limited

Registered provider address: Atria, Spa Road, Bolton BL1 4AG

Responsible individual: Samantha Choules

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Tina Maddison, 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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