

# SC066565

Registered provider: Options Autism (1) Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

The home is privately owned and is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to 26 children. The home provides a specialist service for children with autism spectrum disorder and associated learning disabilities. There is an on-site school which also caters for day pupils. Some children have a placement for 52 weeks a year, while others go home at the weekends and during the school holidays. 'The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.'

There has been no registered manager at this home since June 2021. An acting manager has been appointed to manage the home. An application has not yet been made for them to register with Ofsted.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 9 December 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

## Inspection dates: 9 and 10 February 2022

**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 are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded.

**Date of last inspection:** 8 January 2020

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/01/2020	Full	Good
22/01/2019	Full	Good
03/07/2017	Full	Good
19/01/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate**

There are failures in safeguarding practices and the leadership and management of the home. These shortfalls have had an impact on the judgement for this inspection. As a result, the overall experiences and progress of children is judged as inadequate.

Children are able to develop relationships with the adults who look after them, despite the impact of the staffing shortages within the team. Where possible, managers have maintained consistent staff for children. This has helped to minimise the disruption to the children's daily routine.

The monthly summaries that staff complete provide an accurate account of the children's day-to-day experience of living at this home. The children's individual progress is constantly celebrated by the team. This helps to ensure that children's achievements, no matter how big or small, are recognised and recorded in their case files.

Education is well promoted, and children are helped to attend school each day, which is situated within the grounds of the home. Staff are adaptable and responsive to the children on the days when they need a different style of encouragement when preparing for their day ahead. This reduces the risk of children going into school in an increased state of anxiety.

Children are helped to have enjoyable experiences and take part in fun activities at the home and in the community. These enjoyable experiences, which include children going on activity holidays, bowling, trampolining, amongst many others, are helping children to make progress with their life and independence skills.

The building has been developed by the team to make it feel more homely. There are photos of the children and decorative pictures throughout the communal areas of the home. The children's bedrooms are designed and organised based on their individual needs. This helps children to feel more comfortable.

There is an abundance of photos and other information that helps to show the children's journey. Their daily routines and experiences are nicely captured and give the children memories of their life at the home.

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

Some staff have been neglectful of their duty to supervise and protect children. For example, a staff member left a child unsupervised despite knowing the child has a diagnosis of epilepsy and requires constant monitoring. This left the child at risk of significant harm. Managers failed to notify the regulator of this serious incident.

Managers have failed to share information with the local authority designated officer (LADO) when emerging concerns brought into question a staff member's suitability to work with children. Again, the regulator was not notified. This has prevented independent scrutiny of these serious concerns and leaves children at risk of significant harm.

Managers have failed to ensure that children's risk assessments are followed. Two staff members, who were subject to disciplinary procedures, should not have been lone working with children. Despite this, the staff members had worked in isolation with children on a number of occasions. This does not protect children and leaves them at risk of significant harm.

The use of physical intervention is proportionate and provides protection for children when they are in unsafe situations. However, the quality of records completed by staff varies in quality. There are inconsistencies with the written detail of restraints and the manager's oversight does not always fully explore the incident. The debrief by the manager with staff is limited and the children are not always spoken to within timeframe, as required by The Children's Home Regulations. This limits the manager's ability to analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions taken by staff and increases the risk of harm to children.

Staff make children aware of changes in the home by using communication aids and methods which help children to be better informed about their daily routine. This also enables staff to involve the children in decisions that affect their day-to-day care.

The children's risk assessments and behaviour management plans provide the staff with direction about how to keep the children safe. This helps to ensure that staff know what action to take to reduce the risk of harm to a child.

The checks the registered provider completes on newly recruited staff consistently follow recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.

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

A number of managerial changes have had an impact on the progress and development of this home. The newly appointed manager has a vision for how she would like to improve the service. However, the manager is at the start of her role and has yet to embed the infrastructure needed to sustain a stable and effective staff team.

There is no robust system in place to monitor staff's disciplinary history. Concerns about a staff member's practice have not been fully explored. This has resulted in unsafe staff caring for children.

Managers have failed to monitor and review a staff member's practice when they are subject to an action plan following disciplinary procedures. This includes the supervision of one staff member not taking place as planned. This does not enable

managers to have reassurance that the staff member continues to be safe to work with children.

The impact of managing challenging behaviour and caring for children with complex needs is not always fully explored by managers with staff. This prevents individual staff from learning and limits their ability to manage and avoid situations being repeated.

Team meetings are in place. Individual house meetings also take place. This provides staff with an opportunity to come together and keep informed about the changing needs of the children.

Incident records are not consistently cross-referenced, which means the support from staff when managing an incident with a child cannot be linked. This limits further exploration by the manager and senior managers and may lead to children being in unsafe situations.

Managers have been unsuccessful in their attempts in consulting with people associated with the children, such as parents and professionals. This does not allow critical feedback to be gained and will limit the manager's ability to develop the quality of care for the children.

Achieving a full cohort of staff has been a real challenge to the organisation. On occasions, senior managers have had to make difficult decisions to reduce the number of children that can be cared for at the home. Furthermore, the impact of COVID-19 has further destabilised an already depleted staff team. Positively, senior managers have worked with health agencies, families and the children's local authorities to agree on the strategies to prevent the closure of the home. There is now a programme of recruitment. This will help to rebuild the workforce.

## 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 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>help each child to understand how to keep safe;</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person</p> <p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and</p> <p>that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(v)(vi)(b))</p>	5 April 2022
<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> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p>	5 April 2022

<p>lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose;</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</p> <p>understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home;</p> <p>demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on—</p> <p>feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(f)(g)(ii))</p> <p>The registered provider must review staff members' records to obtain a clear chronological overview of any disciplinary action since being employed by the organisation.</p> <p>The registered provider must ensure that safeguarding procedures are consistently followed when there are concerns about a staff member's practice.</p> <p>The registered provider must evidence that they implement, monitor and review any action plans agreed with the LADO when there are concerns about staff members' practice towards children.</p>	
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>undertake appropriate continuing professional development;</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and</p> <p>have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b))</p>	5 April 2022
<p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes—</p> <p>a description of the measure and its duration;</p>	5 April 2022



<p>details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure;</p> <p>the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and</p> <p>within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")—</p> <p>has spoken to the user about the measure; and</p> <p>has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and</p> <p>within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(iv)(v)(vii)(b)(i)(ii)(c))</p>	
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p> <p>there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there;</p> <p>there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(c)(e))</p>	5 April 2022

\* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

## 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:** SC066565

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

**Registered provider:** Options Autism (1) Limited

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

**Responsible individual:** Karen Ayres

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

## Inspectors

Aaron Mcloughlin, Social Care Inspector  
Jacqueline Malcolm, Social Care Inspector  
Ceri Evans, Regional Inspection Manager

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