

SC459857

Registered provider: St Christopher's Fellowship

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is run by a children's charity. The provider states in its statement of purpose that it provides care and accommodation for up to six children who have emotional, social and/or behavioural difficulties.

Staff use concepts and theoretical models drawn from social pedagogy and attachment theory in their work.

This children's home has two emergency beds, one of which is used to provide up to 140 nights per year of 'staying close' accommodation. This is in conjunction with the Department for Education's 'staying close' initiative.

The manager registered with Ofsted in June 2020.

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

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 March 2022

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| 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 | requires improvement to be 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: 21 October 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 21/10/2019 | Full | Good |
| 13/08/2018 | Full | Good |
| 30/08/2017 | Full | Outstanding |
| 25/01/2017 | Interim | Sustained effectiveness |

Inspection judgements

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

There were five children living in the home at the time of this inspection.

Managers and staff forge strong relationships with children. These relationships play a vital part in supporting children through day-to-day life. Children have recently benefited from direct work with the art therapist. This has helped the children to have a safe space to engage in learning around issues such as bullying.

Most children attend an education provision. Staff encourage and support children to develop good routines to encourage consistent school attendance. One teacher said, 'They have organised transport to and from school (with a chaperone) to mitigate and reduce the potential risks to the (child) and to allow them to build up their resilience, and independence in returning to an educational setting.'

Children spoken to said that they like living in the home. They would like some improvements made, but overall, they said that the home is ok. Children regularly share their views and staff act on these views where appropriate. Complaints are managed well, however, records of complaints do not include full details of all the actions that the staff take to resolve complaints.

Children benefit from regular, individualised, creative and good-quality direct-work sessions. Staff regularly support children in learning useful life skills that help them to achieve their targets. However, full and accurate records of these sessions are not always kept. For example, direct work conducted with children to address self-harm concerns were not fully recorded. This does not evidence the good progress that children make.

Leaders, managers and staff champion culture and diversity. They support children to have a sense of their own identity as well as celebrating and learning about other cultures. This helps children develop a positive self-image and confidence.

The physical environment of the home is clean and homely. However, on the day of the inspection, food was not appropriately labelled as required in order to maintain good food hygiene.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Many aspects of the home's safeguarding practices are effective in promoting children's safety. However, the quality of records, including risk assessments and behaviour management plans, require improvement to be consistently good.

Risk assessments and behaviour management plans do not demonstrate that the manager and staff have explored all known risks to children in a meaningful way. For example, they have not risk assessed or considered the impact of an adult care leaver staying at the home overnight has on the other children, or the locking of the kitchen door at night.

Risk and behaviour management plans do not include and consider all known risks such as, children smoking in bedrooms, risks when children refuse staff entry to their bedrooms and risks relating to children entering and leaving the home through bedroom windows. Furthermore, they do not set out how staff should respond to and manage these emerging risks. This does not demonstrate proactive and effective safeguarding practice.

Staff understand children's individual needs, risks and vulnerabilities. Staff are provided with on-the-job training by the manager. They follow missing-from-home procedures and individual safety plans for children living in the home. However, on one occasion, a child who was not a resident was found in the home. The child was missing from her own residence at the time. Staff failed to report this child's whereabouts to relevant professionals and instead they requested that the child left the home. This was a missed opportunity to ensure that the child was safely returned to her home. The manager took action to contact police and the social worker, but this was after the child had left the home. Staff would have benefited from training in local missing-from-care processes.

Leaders and managers are proactive in seeking the advice of the local authority designated officer when allegations against staff are made. For example, following an allegation, managers followed the local authority designated officer's advice by ensuring that lone working agreements were completed for one staff member. However, these were not signed or dated to determine when the agreement started or to confirm that the staff member had formally agreed to the arrangement.

Staff receive training on managing allegations against professionals. However, one staff member did not demonstrate a good understanding of what to do if an allegation is made against a manager. Furthermore, the member of staff did not demonstrate a good knowledge of whistle-blowing procedures. This does not demonstrate that staff are able to respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns relating to other staff and managers.

Staff only use physical restraint when it is necessary to safeguard children and others. Following restraint incidents, children receive very good support which enables them to reflect on their emotions. As a result, serious and violent incidents have significantly reduced. However, during one isolated incident a staff member told a child that she can restrain her as a means to de-escalate behaviour. This had the opposite effect and although the matter was resolved quickly, this method of trying to manage behaviour was unhelpful for the child.

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

The home is managed by an experienced and qualified registered manager. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the home experiencing staffing instability and difficulties in recruiting new staff. The home has had to use a high number of agency staff. Despite this, the manager demonstrated his commitment to the staff and children by covering shifts to support the day-to-day care of children. However, this impacted on the quality of the manager's oversight of the home.

Leaders and managers undertaking dual roles has impacted on the quality of children's records. For example, records of behaviour management are not sufficiently detailed and do not include records of all the actions staff take to manage behaviour, or consistently include detailed management oversight. Consequently, poor recording and management oversight compromises the monitoring and review systems of the home.

The quality and frequency of staff supervision is variable and not in line with the home's statement of purpose. Not all efforts to support staff have been recorded. For example, managers said that they have provided regular check-in meetings to agency staff. However, records do not support this. Consequently, agency staff do not have the opportunity to talk about their practice and do not have their learning and development reviewed. This impacts on leaders and managers ability to evaluate the impact of agency staff on the quality of care provided to children.

Staff benefit from regular team meetings and say they feel well supported by the manager. However, not all staff have completed the required training to work in a children's home. This includes training on local protocols for children missing from care and transgender awareness training. The manager supports staff with on-the-job training and coaching, which has reduced any impact on children. However, the lack of core training impacts on the quality of staff's responses to children going missing from care.

Two children's case records do not include up-to-date care plans from the placing authority. Despite this shortfall, the staff and manager's regular communication with the child's professional network means that they work in line with the local authority plans and agreed targets for the child.

Leaders and managers work very well with other agencies and carers to support the day-to-day care of children. One teacher said, 'They have always been proactive in assisting the school and communication. The manager has always been excellent.'

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>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)(b))</p> <p>In particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Risk assessments and behaviour management plans should be up to date and demonstrate that staff identify, review and explore risks and their impact on the child. ■ Risk assessments and behaviour management plans should provide staff with clear strategies to manage risk. ■ Individual risk assessments and behaviour management plans should be conducted for any adult spending periods of time visiting the home, especially where the visit has a potential to impact on children living in the home. | 21 April 2022 |
| <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> | 21 April 2022 |

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| <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(v)(vii))</p> <p>In particular, this relates to ensuring that staff are familiar with the home's whistle-blowing procedures and have a good understanding of what to do if a child makes an allegation against a senior staff member.</p> | |
| <p>The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which—</p> <p>include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child;</p> <p>are kept up to date; and</p> <p>are signed and dated by the author of each entry.</p> <p>Case records must be kept—</p> <p>if the child dies before attaining the age of 18, for 15 years from the date of the child's death;</p> <p>in cases not falling within sub-paragraph (a), for 75 years from the child's date of birth;</p> <p>securely in the children's home during the period when the child to whom the case records relate is accommodated there; and</p> <p>in a secure place after the child has ceased to be accommodated in the home. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(b)(c)(d))</p> <p>In particular, this refers to ensuring full and accurate records of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ children's day-to-day experiences in the home; ■ the progress children make and how progress is reviewed; ■ all actions staff take to manage behaviour effectively; | <p>21 April 2022</p> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ management oversight of staff's actions and the day-to-day oversight of the home; ■ all actions staff take to respond to complaints; ■ signed and dated agreements by all relevant individuals. | |
| <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 promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <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. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(d))</p> <p>In particular, this relates to ensuring that staff receive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ supervision in line with the statement of purpose; ■ training to meet the needs of each child. This includes core training for children's homes such as understanding the local protocols for children who go missing from care, effective behaviour management techniques and transgender awareness. | 21 April 2022 |
| <p>This regulation applies to a child who is looked after by a local authority.</p> <p>The registered person must co-operate with the child's placing authority in agreeing and signing the child's placement plan. (Regulation 17 (1) (2))</p> | 21 April 2022 |

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that just as in a family home, children should be able to access all shared areas of their home including the kitchen, unless there are specific reasons why this would not meet a child's needs. Any decisions to limit a child's access to any area of the home must only be made

where this is intended to safeguard the child's welfare. All decisions should be informed by a rigorous assessment of that individual child's needs, be properly recorded and be kept under regular review. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10)

- The registered person should ensure that the children's home complies with relevant health and safety legislation such as food hygiene and ensure that food is stored safely and appropriately labelled. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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: SC459857

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: St Christopher's Fellowship

Registered provider address: 1 Putney High Street, London, Wandsworth SW15 1SZ

Responsible individual: Philip Townsend

Registered manager: Matthew King

Inspector

Jayshree Pillay, Social Care Inspector

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