

SC361167

Options Autism (5) Limited

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home provides care for children with autism spectrum disorder. The children 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 home offers specialised education and care for up to eight children.

A new manager was appointed in December 2021 and has yet to apply to register with Ofsted. She is suitably experienced and is working towards the level 5 qualification in management.

Inspection date: 14 March 2022

This monitoring visit

On 15 February 2022, Ofsted carried out a monitoring visit at this home in response to concerning information arising out of investigations in relation to unexplained injuries to a child.

During that visit, Ofsted found serious and widespread concerns in relation to the protection of children and the leadership and management of the home. As a result of that visit, Ofsted issued a notice of restriction of accommodation. Seven new requirements were raised, including two that were subject to compliance notices. Some requirements raised at the monitoring visit on 1 February 2022 were not reviewed on 15 February 2022 and so were restated.

On 2 March 2022, the provider notified Ofsted that it will be voluntarily cancelling the home's registration and the home will close on 28 March 2022.

This monitoring visit was made to review the progress managers and staff had made in meeting the steps outlined in the two compliance notices raised in relation to the protection of children and the leadership and management of the home.

The provider had complied with the restriction of accommodation. There have been no new admissions, and seven children lived at the home at the time of the monitoring visit.

Management oversight of children's care and welfare is not always effective and leaves children at risk of harm. Shortfalls in medication management have re-emerged. For example, there is no clear record of why a child was administered medication for pain relief on occasion. In addition, it is not clear if information about changes in medication and concerns about the health of a child are disseminated to staff effectively. Furthermore, a cream for a child was not being administered in line with the prescription.

Some children's health needs require urgent review. While the provider is escalating these concerns with placing authorities and local clinical commissioning groups, for some children, this has not yet resulted in a clear plan about how these needs are going to be assessed and reviewed. As a result, not all aspects of children's health are met well.

There has been some improvement in managers reviewing daily records. For example, staff are monitoring and recording more effectively what children eat and drink. In addition, some incident reports benefit from good oversight. However, improvements do not go far enough. The review of incidents and physical interventions is not consistently good. In addition, managers miss important information regarding illnesses and incidents. For example, one child's daily record indicates they had two incidents on one day, but only one incident record had been completed. On another occasion, staff recorded that a child had communicated that they were sad due to a sore throat, but it was not clear whether staff responded to this promptly and if so how.

There have been concerns regarding unexplained injuries to children and about the quality of recording of any injuries or marks children sustain. As a result, managers have undertaken a review with staff and provided additional guidance about how staff need to record such information. Despite this, shortfalls in recording important information remain. For example, one child's record stated 'old/new injuries', but it is not clear what this means. This shows that staff are not following guidance and managers are not picking up on such issues as part of their monitoring.

Staffing arrangements at the home are unclear. Rosters do not clearly show which staff are caring for which child and when. For example, nightly planners have not been completed on some days, meaning that it is not clear which staff members have been working with which children. On occasions, agency staff are asked to care for children with escalating and highly complex needs. It is not always clear whether

these staff have the training and skills to meet the needs of the children they are asked to care for.

Inspectors observed positive relationships between children and staff. Children continue to access the on-site school. Children enjoy time in the garden areas, and some children occasionally enjoy a trip away from the home.

Managers have progressed investigations into staff conduct and practice, and they have taken action, when necessary, in consultation with human resources colleagues. Challenges remain in relation to staff sufficiency and the skills and experience of some staff. As a result, some children are not always supported in line with their plans and needs.

Following the monitoring visit on 15 February 2022, three additional managers were assigned to the home from other settings in the organisation to help oversee practice and improvement, and provide additional reassurance about the safety and welfare of children. However, two out of the three managers were redeployed and so did not carry out this function for as long as initially planned for. This has limited the scope for improvement and has not addressed the shortfalls in day-to-day management oversight of the service.

The compliance notices were found not to be met. Given that the home is closing, no additional requirements or recommendations have been raised following this visit. The focus is on care planning for children to ensure that they move from the home safely. Ofsted has been in communication with the provider and the children's placing authorities about concerns in relation to children's care and welfare. Ofsted will continue to monitor the home until it closes.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/10/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
04/08/2021	Full	Inadequate
22/10/2019	Full	Good
27/06/2018	Full	Good

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: Children's home

Registered provider: Options Autism (5) Limited

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

Responsible individual: Anne Adams

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

James Tallis, Social Care Inspector

Jackie Line, Social Care Inspector

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