

SC035500

Registered provider: South Gloucestershire Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this secure children's home

This secure children's home is managed by a local authority. It is approved by the Secretary of State to restrict children's liberty. The home can accommodate up to 24 children aged between 10 and 18 years. There were 10 children living at the home at the time of this inspection.

All places available at the home are commissioned on a contractual basis by the Youth Custody Service (YCS). The YCS may, under certain circumstances, permit local authority children's services to spot-purchase a vacant bed at the home, to enable a local authority to place a child on welfare grounds under section 25 of the Children Act 1989. Admission of any young person under section 25 of the Children Act 1989 who is under 13 years of age requires the approval of the Secretary of State.

The commissioning of health services at this home is the statutory responsibility of NHS England under the Health and Social Care Act 2012. Education is provided on site in dedicated facilities.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since January 2023.

Inspection dates: 18 to 20 April 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
Children's education and learning	good
Children's health	good
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good

The secure children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 2 August 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
02/08/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
20/04/2022	Full	Inadequate
08/06/2021	Full	Good
20/04/2021	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children develop positive relationships with staff and benefit from predictable structures and routines. An inclusive culture which promotes equality and diversity enables children to explore their developing sense of identity. Children appreciate the support they receive from staff and recognise that they have made good progress as a result of living in the home.

Children's views are valued. They are closely involved in developing their written care and support plans. As a result, the plans describe children's choices about how to care for them and how to help them when they are struggling to manage their emotions. Children influence decisions about the day-to-day running of the home by participating in children's meetings which focus on helping them to make choices about menus, activities and resources.

Staff make good use of the facilities to ensure that children can participate in activities that support their individual talents and interests. Children are also encouraged to join in group activities. This helps them to learn how to build relationships with each other and with staff which are based on trust and respect. The result is an atmosphere which is lively but relaxed.

Children are supported to learn valuable life skills to prepare them to live more independently in the future. When they are ready, children have opportunities to take part in work experience. This improves children's self-esteem and their confidence that they can achieve their career goals in the future.

When children are leaving the home, their move is planned thoughtfully and well. Where appropriate, children are given a package of outreach support. This is used to give children the help that they need when they leave and includes an offer of pastoral and spiritual support from an imam. Sustaining relationships with children who have left the home strengthens their belief that they are important to the adults who care for them.

Managers and staff understand the importance of working closely with the people who are important to children. Children are encouraged to maintain regular telephone and face-to-face contact with their families. Professionals from children's placing authorities who were spoken to during the inspection were complimentary about the practical and emotional support provided to children. The social worker for one child said, 'The staff have been amazing. They were excellent at applying a therapeutic approach to the child's daily care. They had a great deal of knowledge about the complexities surrounding her needs and went above and beyond to help with the transition into the community.'

Improvements to the environment are underway and living areas are more homely. A sensory garden is also being created. Children have been involved in making

choices about the way the spaces will look and in carrying out the works. This gives them a sense of ownership and pride in their surroundings.

Children know how to make a complaint if they are unhappy about any aspect of their care. They receive a written response from managers that includes information about how to escalate their concerns if they are unhappy with the outcome. However, records of complaints do not consistently capture whether children are satisfied with the actions which have been taken in response to the complaint.

Children's education and learning: good

Leaders have clear oversight of the provision. They make effective use of external and internal quality assurance processes to develop the curriculum they offer. Since the last inspection, leaders have greatly improved how they plan and track each individual child's curriculum.

Leaders provide a broad and ambitious array of subjects to meet the needs of children. Children benefit from the opportunity to study GCSEs in subjects such as mathematics, English, history, and art, as well as an array of vocational training subjects. However, children do not have enough opportunity to gain accredited qualifications in these vocational subjects.

In the large majority of cases, teachers and instructors have professional expertise and qualifications that match their subject areas well. Staff with responsibility for special educational needs also have appropriate qualifications and experience.

Leaders provide teachers and instructors with useful training on topics to help them support children, such as trauma or memory and cognitive load.

In most subjects, teachers and instructors plan their curriculums coherently. They use comprehensive information about children's starting points, including their social and emotional needs. Teachers and instructors include children in planning, so that children understand their academic goals well.

Teachers and instructors mostly teach children well. They explain new topics clearly, and deal with children's misconceptions effectively. The large majority of teachers provide clear, direct feedback to children that helps them to improve their work. However, in a minority of cases, teachers do not ensure that children use this feedback to make necessary improvements.

Teachers and instructors ensure that children have the opportunity to practise and revise key topics. When they find that children do not have a thorough understanding of these topics, most teachers and instructors adapt activities well to provide extra help to children.

Staff with responsibility for special educational needs have a sound knowledge of the additional learning needs of children. Teachers get clear guidance and use this to make effective alterations to support children with special educational needs.

In the large majority of subjects, children make substantial and sustained progress. In construction, they know how to use equipment safely and correctly. Children who study GCSE mathematics develop a detailed and fluent knowledge of the curriculum.

Children produce written work that is of the expected standard. Children who study English write expressively and persuasively. In a small but significant number of cases, they produce impressive creative work that has won recognition in national competitions.

The large majority of children achieve the accredited qualifications in the subjects they study. Those who study GCSE mathematics and English make substantial progress from their starting points, and in many cases attain high grades.

Children who leave the home benefit from bespoke support to help them move on to further education and employment. However, children who are not close to discharge can only access limited careers support. Leaders provide suitable internal work experience placements for the large majority of children who cannot access this externally.

Leaders track children's attendance carefully, and take appropriate action when children miss classes. In almost all cases, children have high attendance at classes. The very large majority of children arrive punctually to their lessons.

In the large majority of lessons, children work diligently. They demonstrate considerable pride in their work, which is shown, for example, in the clear and neat notes that they take in mathematics lessons.

Children develop a good knowledge of personal and social development topics, such as how to be more resilient and how to look after their mental health. When they express extreme points of view on topics such as sexuality, teachers and instructors challenge children appropriately.

Lessons such as dance, yoga and physical education help children to become physically fit. Leaders provide plenty of opportunities for children to use their newly developed skills to improve their living environment, such as using their carpentry and horticulture skills to smarten up communal gardens.

Staff at all levels are passionate about encouraging children to believe in themselves as successful learners, for example through celebration assembly events, or involvement in national competitions. Through this approach, staff have a considerable positive impact on children's levels of self-confidence.

In a small number of cases, teachers do not plan or teach their curriculums well enough. They do not carefully consider the order of the topics that they teach, and do not use resources which meet the needs of children well. During lessons, they hurry through complex topics. Children quickly lose interest in these subjects and, as a result, become disruptive.

Children's health: good

Children's health outcomes improve when they come to live at the home. Members of staff in the health and well-being team have worked exceptionally hard to ensure that staff vacancies have not had a negative impact on the service that children receive. The voice of the child is at the centre of interventions, and children speak positively about the support that they receive for their physical and mental health.

Children benefit from having access to a range of on-site health services and professionals, including a GP and nurse-led clinics, a speech, language and communication therapist and a substance misuse worker. Other services are provided by visiting professionals such as a dentist and an optician. Children can also be referred to an occupational therapist. As a result, holistic health assessments ensure that children's needs are swiftly identified, and individualised plans are put in place to meet them.

Children are seen by a healthcare practitioner as soon as possible following incidents of physical restraint or self-harm. Members of the health and well-being team, including the GP, have attended training in the use of physical restraint. Consequently, they are able to carry out well-informed debriefs with children after incidents. However, this good practice is undermined by some shortfalls in recording of the debriefs.

Secure stairs (a whole-system integrated approach for children in secure settings) is embedded in staff practice. It ensures that the care and support provided to children creates an environment where they feel safe and able to start to explore their emotional and mental health needs. Children have detailed formulation plans in place which are reviewed as part of a multidisciplinary meeting. Staff attend regular 'formulation huddles' and reflective practice sessions. These meetings, along with access to suitable training, help staff to provide trauma-informed care to children.

Members of the health and well-being team are confident about the steps they need to take when they have safeguarding concerns about children. However, they report that there have been some occasions when managers have not provided feedback about the outcome of investigations into those concerns. There is potential for this shortfall in communication to have a detrimental impact on the healthcare professionals' direct work with children.

The system for recording medication has been reviewed and amended to promote safe practice. Members of the health and well-being team are in the process of adapting to the changes. They are implementing a new system to ensure that all medication errors are identified and acted on. During the inspection, inspectors identified a shortfall in relation to the transporting and administration of medication. Managers took steps to address this.

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

Managers and staff prioritise the safety and well-being of children. They have a good awareness of each child's strengths and vulnerabilities.

Positive behaviour is promoted through helping children develop self-control, resilience, and an ability to learn new coping strategies. When incidents occur, staff use effective de-escalation techniques. As a result, the need for physical restraint and single separation (where children are locked in an area when they meet the legal criteria of being a significant risk to themselves or others) has reduced.

When incidents which require physical restraint and single separation occur, managers carry out a prompt review with the children and staff involved. They explore what happened and seek ways of reducing the risk of incidents reoccurring. However, some records do not fully describe the thorough review which takes place in practice.

Children at risk of self-harm are checked at intervals which are appropriate for their level of risk depending on their mood. When incidents of self-harm occur, staff take effective action, including seeking advice from medical professionals to ensure children receive the support they need for their physical health and their emotional wellbeing. Ongoing support for children helps them to develop the skills they need to become increasingly safe.

On the occasions when children make allegations against staff or disclose historical abuse, managers follow safeguarding procedures and involve the appropriate external safeguarding agencies. This ensures that there is timely independent scrutiny of the plans which are put in place to safeguard children.

Safe recruitment practices are understood and implemented by the manager and the staff responsible for this area of practice. This reduces the potential for unsuitable adults to be employed at the home.

Processes for monitoring and managing health and safety matters and maintenance tasks are good. However, some managers spoken to during the inspection were not aware of the routine checks of the building and grounds which are carried out to ensure that the physical environment remains safe and secure. This represents a risk of checks being missed if those managers responsible for carrying them out are absent from work.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Managers continue to demonstrate a commitment to improving the culture and ensuring that children receive genuinely nurturing care. Staff speak positively about their experience of working at the home and the difference that they can make to outcomes for children.

The independent person is providing a more rigorous level of scrutiny. Consequently, their reports now contain evaluation and an analysis of the impact of the care that children receive. Managers make good use of these reports to inform service development.

Managers have a sound awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. They have made changes to practice to address shortfalls that they have identified. For example, the staff induction booklet has been improved. There is a comprehensive workforce development plan in place. This provides details of actions which will be taken to further improve the service, for example, by making staff supervision records more meaningful and improving records of staff attendance at training courses.

Managers have recognised that record-keeping systems could be more streamlined. They are in the process of introducing a new electronic system. They are being thoughtful about how the change is made from one system to another to ensure that staff do not feel overwhelmed. In the meantime, however, some aspects of management monitoring, such as debriefs carried out following physical restraint, are not being fully recorded and therefore children's records are not complete.

Local safeguarding partners are not fulfilling their responsibility to review the use of physical restraint as set out in 'Working together to safeguard children (2018)'. This removes an important level of scrutiny.

The number of children currently living at the home (10) is less than half of the number of available places (24) due to a decrease in the number of referrals.

What does the secure children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children can see the results of their views being listened to and acted on. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)
- The registered person should ensure that the ethos of the home supports each child to learn. In particular, ensure that all teachers plan and teach their curriculums effectively, so that children gain substantial new knowledge and skills, and ensure that children have the opportunity to work towards meaningful accredited qualifications throughout the vocational training curriculum. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.18)
- The registered person should ensure that medicines are administered in line with a medically approved protocol. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)
- The registered person should ensure that all staff consistently follow the home's policies and procedures for the benefit of the children in the home's care. This is with specific reference to ensuring that members of the health and well-being team are kept updated when they raise safeguarding concerns, and that all managers are aware of their responsibilities in relation to health and safety. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.20)
- The registered person should ensure that staff understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- Where there is a secure establishment in a local area, safeguarding partners should include a review of the use of restraint within that establishment in their report, and the findings of the review should be reported to the Youth Justice Board. Specifically, the registered person should remind the local safeguarding partnership of their statutory duties (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018, Chapter 3, Page 80, paragraph 45)

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'.

Secure children's home details

Unique reference number: SC035500

Provision sub-type: Secure children's home

Registered provider: South Gloucestershire Council

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