

1275569

Registered provider: The Mulberry Bush Organisation Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

According to the home's statement of purpose, the home provides an integrated combination of residential therapeutic care, treatment and education for children of primary-school age with severe social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

The home is made up of three separate houses, providing care for children for either 38 or 52 weeks a year. At the time of the inspection, 22 children were living at the home across the three houses.

The manager registered with Ofsted on 18 June 2018.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Inspection dates: 4 to 6 July 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
---	-------------

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
---	------

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

Date of last inspection: 20 December 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
20/12/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
21/04/2021	Full	Outstanding
05/11/2019	Full	Outstanding
23/10/2018	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are cared for by a passionate and dedicated team of skilled staff. Meaningful joint working between the multidisciplinary teams ensures that children benefit from an effective wraparound service.

Staff work in partnership with children's families. Parents spoken to during the inspection told inspectors that communication with the home is effective and open, and that this means that the children's families and the staff team give consistent messages to children. Several parents said that since their child started to stay at the home, they have learned to take part in a wide range of leisure activities, which has helped to improve the quality of the time children spend with their families.

Working closely with external professionals is given high priority. Other professionals spoken to during the inspection reported effective joint working. They also spoke positively about the outcomes for children.

The progress that children make in relation to their social and emotional well-being improves their life chances. Each child has personalised targets that are regularly reviewed. Providing support to children to help them achieve their targets is embedded in staff practice. Staff are adept at noticing and rewarding when children achieve something that may seem small but is significant for them. Staff contribute to good-quality reports that are shared at review meetings. The reports provide clear summaries of key areas of progress for children.

The school nurse gives children individualised healthcare support and provides expert input into children's plans. This ensures that staff have a clear understanding of each child's health needs and how to meet them.

Staff support children to engage in education, and children make good progress from their starting points. Children's education goals are understood by care staff, and they help children to achieve them. When children make progress towards their goals outside of school time, the care staff share successes with the education team. This ensures that all the children's achievements are noted and celebrated.

Children benefit from being able to choose from a wide range of on-site activities that allow them to fully explore their talents and interests. Children also have regular access to activities in the wider community, including local clubs, camping and leisure facilities.

Managers recognise that some of the living areas require refurbishment, and there are improvement plans in place. In the meantime, the premises are well maintained by the staff, maintenance and domestic teams.

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

Staff prioritise the safety and well-being of children. When children make allegations about staff, managers respond robustly to ensure the safety of children. The registered manager has developed a close working relationship with the local authority designated officers and consults with them in a timely manner whenever safeguarding concerns arise. Thorough investigations are carried out when necessary, and any deficits or shortfalls in the quality of care are addressed.

Positive behaviour is promoted by providing predictable structures and routines for children. Input from the therapies and networks team encourages staff to respond to behavioural incidents in a way that promotes learning for the child. Children's parents and their placing authorities speak highly of the work carried out to help children become increasingly safe. There is a culture of openness that helps children to discuss mistakes and think empathetically about the impact of their actions on others.

Children and their families know how to make a complaint if they are unhappy about any aspect of a child's care. Children's families receive a written response that includes information about how to escalate concerns if they are unhappy about the outcome. When children make a complaint, managers meet with children to discuss the complaint outcome and check whether there is any further action that they would like to be taken. As a result, children and their families can be confident that complaints are taken seriously, investigated and acted on.

Staff are aware of the fact that poor dynamics between children could result in bullying behaviour. When children are struggling to live together harmoniously, they are supported to express themselves in a way that promotes relationships based on trust and respect.

Safe recruitment practices are understood and implemented by the manager and the staff responsible for this area of practice. Children are meaningfully involved in the recruitment process. Managers carry out effective monitoring of records to make sure that all necessary checks are carried out. This reduces the potential for unsuitable adults to be employed at the home.

There have been significant improvements to management monitoring of incidents that result in physical restraint. When staff inform managers that physical restraint has been used, incidents are scrutinised by managers to ensure that the use of the measure was appropriate. However, there has been a small number of occasions when staff have carried children out of a room because their behaviour was having a negative impact on other children. Records do not demonstrate that managers recognise this behaviour management response as physical restraint. As a result, these incidents are not always carefully reviewed by managers in the same way as other physical restraints, to make sure that the use of the measure was safe and proportionate to the situation.

Staff are fully informed about the therapeutic model that is at the centre of the home's ethos. This therapeutic approach reduces the likelihood of behaviour management being necessary. However, during the inspection, inspectors saw some practice and read some records that show that, on occasion, children could be given more thoughtful support. In one example, staff were observed to disagree about whether a child could attend a football club before he completed some reflection about an incident. This caused confusion for the child, which resulted in him becoming upset.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Managers' aspirations for children are high, and they have high expectations about the quality of care that staff provide to children. Managers offer staff good-quality professional development opportunities. These include a bespoke foundation degree in therapeutic childcare. An enthusiastic training manager works hard to create new and engaging opportunities for the team to enhance its knowledge and skill base.

With the exception of the shortfall in relation to recognising all incidents of physical restraint, managers make effective use of internal and external monitoring systems to understand the children's lived experience of care, and they use this to shape care practice.

Staff speak positively about the quality of the support that they receive from managers and each other. Staff work with managers to make decisions about children's plans and the wider service. Staff say that they feel heard by managers and that their opinions matter.

Records of staff supervision demonstrate that managers use supervision effectively to ensure that staff know how to safely care for children in line with their care plans and risk assessments. Managers also discuss staff performance with them during supervision and address any shortfalls in the quality of care they are providing to children.

Managers value children's views. Children have several opportunities to have a say in the way their home and school are run, including the student council, house meetings and whole-school meetings.

Staff encourage children to champion inclusivity. Staff ensure that children are supported to celebrate difference and uniqueness. The week before the inspection, the whole school had enjoyed a range of Pride celebrations, which children engaged with enthusiastically.

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, The 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>Restraint in relation to a child is only permitted for the purpose of preventing—</p> <p>injury to any person (including the child);</p> <p>serious damage to the property of any person (including the child); or</p> <p>a child who is accommodated in a secure children's home from absconding from the home.</p> <p>Restraint in relation to a child must be necessary and proportionate. (Regulation 20 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2))</p>	31 August 2023

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff work to make the children's home an environment that supports children's physical, mental and emotional health, in line with the approach set out in the home's statement of purpose. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 33, paragraph 7.3)

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: 1275569

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: The Mulberry Bush Organisation Ltd

Responsible individual: Lee Wright

Registered manager: Claire McCarthy

Inspectors

Peter Jackson, Social Care Inspector
Helen Simmons, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023