

1214396

Registered provider: River Valley Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned home provides care for up to two children with social and emotional difficulties.

The manager was registered with Ofsted in February 2023.

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 December 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **requires improvement to be good**

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

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

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 February 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/02/2023	Full	Good
26/10/2021	Full	Good
03/12/2019	Full	Good
23/10/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

At the time of this inspection, two children were living in the home. Children told the inspector that they like living in the home and enjoy spending time with staff.

Since the previous inspection, there have been improvements to the home environment, with communal areas benefiting from redecoration. However, at the time of the inspection, parts of the home looked dirty and disorganised. For example, the garden was littered with rubbish and one child's bedroom needed a deep clean. This does not promote a homely atmosphere.

The children have plans to inform staff how to care for children. However, these are not updated to reflect their current situation. In addition, managers and staff have failed to consider in these plans the objectives set for the children by the local authority. Managers and staff do not consult children to gain their wishes and feelings about their plans, so their views are not represented.

The written records of children's experiences are not helpful to children. Some records blame children and fail to demonstrate that staff have an understanding of children's needs or the support that is offered.

Children are encouraged to take part in a range of activities and they like having fun with staff. Activities include children flying model planes and going on ghost hunts, which support their individual interests and hobbies.

The children do not attend education. At the time of inspection, there were no formal timetables in place to evidence how children are supported to access education and how they should spend their days. The lack of input to establish a routine that prioritises learning means that children are not making academic progress.

The children are registered with local health services and supported to attend appointments. However, health needs are not consistently met. For example, staff have failed to implement reduction plans for children who vape and smoke cigarettes and they do not have conversations with them about reducing their smoking or vaping. Staff have created menu planners to encourage healthy eating but are not supporting the children to follow these. Meals are not healthy or balanced and records show that meals are eaten late at night. This does not encourage healthy eating or a good routine and could have implications for children's health.

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

Risk management arrangements require improvement. Children's written plans do not include all known risks. Where plans include clear strategies, these have not always been followed by staff. For example, one child's risk assessment states that their mobile phone should be checked every day. However, these checks have not been carried out since October 2023. In another case, when one child left the home, staff did not follow their risk assessment and contact them after one hour. The manager had failed to identify these concern and take action to improve the child's safety.

Managers do not ensure that staff recruitment checks meet requirements. Recruitment records lack the required detail around a person's employment history and the reasons why they have left positions working with children. This practice does not support safer recruitment and may expose children to adults who are not suitable to work with them.

The home uses motion sensors which alert the staff if the children have left their bedrooms during the night. The home's statement of purpose has been updated to reflect the systems used. However, children's risk assessments do not reflect the need for these systems and all children have not been consulted. As a result, this monitoring system may be being used unnecessarily.

When children are facing difficulties, staff are proactive, thoughtful and responsive. This provides children with care and consideration and supports them to develop more positive behaviours.

There have been no serious incidents which may prompt practice such as physical intervention and children do not regularly go missing from the home.

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

Since the previous inspection, a new manager has been appointed, who has registered with Ofsted. Staff are positive about the relationships they have with managers and say that they feel supported.

The registered manager's monitoring of children's care has been ineffective in identifying and responding to shortfalls. In addition, managers have not addressed all the requirements made at the last inspection and, as a result, these have been repeated. During the inspection, managers said that they would respond promptly to the shortfalls identified.

The manager has failed to ensure that all staff have completed mandatory training. In addition, staff have not received training to respond to the children's needs. For example, some staff still require training in internet safety and supporting children

who self-harm. The managers acknowledged this shortfall during the inspection and arranged appropriate training.

Managers are not providing staff with regular supervision sessions, in line with the home's workforce development plan. Records of supervision are brief and there is limited discussion about what is happening for the service and for the children. In addition, yearly appraisals have not taken place. The lack of support and effective oversight limits the opportunity to help staff improve their practice.

External professionals are positive about the care provided in the home. They said communication from staff is good and that staff support children's time with important people in their lives.

The management team advocates for the children when services are not meeting their needs. For example, when there was delay in a child's education, health and care plan being finalised, the manager regularly emailed the appropriate agencies to challenge this.

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>The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>understand the children’s home’s overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that staff—</p> <p>provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably;</p> <p>ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to—</p> <p>meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6 (1)(a) (2)(b)(vii)(c)(i))</p> <p>This relates to the home environment and ensuring that all areas of the home are clean. In addition, that children have appropriate access to snacks.</p> <p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</p>	<p>18 January 2024</p>
<p>The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure-</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>help each child to achieve the child’s education and training targets, as recorded in the child’s relevant plans;</p>	<p>18 January 2024</p>

<p>support each child’s learning and development, including helping the child to develop independent study skills and, where appropriate, helping the child to complete independent study;</p> <p>understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers;</p> <p>help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment;</p> <p>promote opportunities for each child to learn informally;</p> <p>help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible;</p> <p>help each child who is above compulsory school age to participate in further education, training or employment and to prepare for future care, education or employment;</p> <p>help each child to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child’s relevant plans; and</p> <p>that each child has access to appropriate equipment, facilities and resources to support the child’s learning. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(viii)(ix)(x)(b))</p> <p>This specifically relates to children being supported to engage in education in the home while waiting for decisions to be made regarding their school placement. Opportunities for further education need to be encouraged and a robust plan around this is required.</p>	
<p>The health and well-being standard is that—</p> <p>the health and well-being needs of children are met;</p> <p>children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being; and</p> <p>children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b)(c))</p>	<p>18 January 2024</p>

<p>This specifically relates to ensuring that when children smoke, they are supported to understand the health implications and support is offered to reduce their use of vapes and cigarettes. In addition, when children follow poor diets, that support is offered to change eating habits.</p>	
<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>have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;</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>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home’s child protection policies;</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;</p> <p>that the effectiveness of the home’s child protection policies is monitored regularly. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)(e))</p> <p>This specifically relates to risk management plans for children, and that these are followed by staff.</p>	<p>18 January 2024</p>
<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>18 January 2024</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;</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(h))</p> <p>This specifically relates to ensuring that staff training is updated and that staff complete training that is specific to children’s needs.</p> <p>Also, to ensuring that monitoring systems are effective and that these highlight shortfalls or where improvements in practice could be made.</p>	
<p>The care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home;</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that arrangements are in place to-</p> <p>manage and review the placement of each child in the home</p> <p>that each child’s relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14 (1)(a) (2)(b)(ii)(c))</p> <p>This specifically relates to ensuring that children’s plans are updated to reflect their current situation and that plans set by the local authority are followed.</p>	18 January 2024
<p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children’s safety.</p>	18 January 2024

<p>The registered person may only—</p> <p>employ an individual to work at the children’s home; or if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3).</p> <p>The requirements are that—</p> <p>the individual is of integrity and good character;</p> <p>full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a) (3))</p> <p>This specifically relates to safer recruitment and ensuring that records include the necessary checks, such as employment history and reasons why staff have left previous roles.</p>	
<p>The registered person must—</p> <p>ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction.</p> <p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</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 (1)(a) (4)(b)(c))</p> <p>This specifically relates to staff supervision sessions and ensuring they are reflective and have purpose. In addition, that staff complete the home’s internal probation plan and that yearly appraisals take place.</p> <p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</p>	<p>18 January 2024</p>

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the home has a written policy for any monitoring equipment, describing how this will support the safeguarding and well-being of those living and working in the home, in accordance with regulation

24. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.16)

- The registered person should ensure that the location review includes the identification of any risks and opportunities presented by the home's location and strategies for managing these. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.1)

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: 1214396

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: River Valley Care Limited

Registered provider address: The Stables, Chestnut Farm, Cuxham, Watlington, Oxfordshire OX49 5ND

Responsible individual: Quentin Carson

Registered manager: Edward Hannibal

Inspectors

Sophie Hills, Social Care Inspector
Charlotte Love, Social Care Inspector

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