

1214396

Registered provider: River Valley Care Ltd

Assurance 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 date: 26 March 2024

Date of last inspection: 5 December 2023

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

At the time of the inspection, the registered manager was on annual leave. The responsible individual was overseeing the home in the manager's absence.

Two children were living in the home at the time of the inspection. No children have moved into or on from the home since the last inspection.

Since the last inspection, there have been four episodes of children going missing from home. The staff respond appropriately by looking for children and reporting them as missing, in line with their missing-from-home protocol. Additionally, the staff complete direct-work sessions with the children to identify their reasons for going missing and to explore risks with them. While the staff respond well to these incidents, records of the incidents are not of sufficiently good quality. The registered manager failed to report one significant missing-from-home incident to Ofsted, and they failed to report an incident that potentially raises concerns of child sexual exploitation to Ofsted. Other appropriate steps were taken, and work was completed with the child.

Children are not in education or employment. The staff try to support the children with their education and learning; however, this lacks structure and routine, which means that the children are not being educated appropriately. The registered manager has escalated their concerns about the delay in identifying an education setting for one child, and another child has been supported to apply for different jobs and has participated in voluntary work.

Staff support the children to take age-appropriate risk. This is seen with the use of mobile phones, gaming and time in the community. Staff work with the children to help them keep themselves safe. Despite this, there is a lack of clear guidance around the monitoring of devices, and staff do not know what one child is accessing through their gaming.

Staff support the children with their independence. One child is preparing for their move into semi-independence next year, and some work has been completed to help them prepare, such as budgeting for food shopping and cooking. However, this is currently on pause so that further work can be completed with the child on healthy eating and a nutritionally balanced diet.

Children's health needs are met. The staff ensure that the children attend their routine appointments. One child administers their own medication as part of their independence skills, and there is a risk assessment in place for this. The staff have worked with both children around their use of vapes, and there is evidence of direct

work being completed. Referrals have also been made to support services; however, the children are not ready to engage in giving up their use of such products.

Children are not involved in their care planning. The staff have not engaged the children when reviewing and updating their in-house placement plans. This means that the children do not have a clear understanding of their care and future plans, nor do they contribute to setting goals and targets.

Safer recruitment practices are in place, reducing the risk of inappropriate people being employed in the home. Supervision is now timely but is not yet of sufficiently good quality. Annual staff appraisals are now in place.

The registered manager is still adapting to his new role and has received support from the responsible individual. Despite this, there are still shortfalls in leadership and management, especially in relation to management oversight, effective monitoring and systems. Furthermore, the registered manager has failed to notify Ofsted of two significant incidents, and the quality of care review is of poor quality.

There have been improvements in the home environment. The garden has been cleared and tidied, and there have been updates to the home, including maintenance in a staff bathroom, new patio doors and painting throughout. Photos of the children who live, or have lived, in the home enjoying different activities enhance the home decor, and the children's bedrooms are personalised to their individual tastes.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/12/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
21/02/2023	Full	Good
26/10/2021	Full	Good
03/12/2019	Full	Good

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 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>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>30 April 2024</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 within 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. Poor routines in the home do not encourage learning and educational activities.</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>This specifically relates to ensuring that when children smoke, they are supported to understand the health implications of this and support is offered to reduce their usage. Additionally, when poor diets are followed, support should be offered to change eating habits.</p>	30 April 2024
<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>	30 April 2024

<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 ensuring that these are reviewed and updated to reflect all concerns and that significant concerns are shared appropriately.</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>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>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 role modelling good practice for staff and offering them support and upskilling. This also</p>	<p>30 April 2024</p>

<p>relates to improving monitoring systems in the home to ensure that shortfalls are rectified and that all aspects of the manager's role are fulfilled.</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 internal plans are updated to reflect the current situation for children and that plans set by the local authority are followed.</p>	<p>30 April 2024</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. (Regulation 33 (1)(a) (4)(b))</p> <p>This specifically relates to staff supervision sessions, as they are not reflective and lack purpose.</p>	<p>30 April 2024</p>
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p> <p>a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation;</p> <p>an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b))</p>	<p>30 April 2024</p>

<p>This specifically relates to the registered manager notifying Ofsted of significant events around children going missing from home and potential child sexual exploitation concerns.</p>	
<p>The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children (“a quality of care review”) at least once every 6 months.</p> <p>In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating—</p> <p>the quality of care provided for children;</p> <p>the feedback and opinions of children about the children’s home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and</p> <p>any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children.</p> <p>(Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the registered manager improving the quality of the care review and ensuring that it includes feedback and a clear action plan to address shortfalls.</p>	<p>30 April 2024</p>

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1214396

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: River Valley Care Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Quentin Carson

Registered manager: Edward Hannibal

Inspector

Stacie Sharpe, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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