

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 registered manager left their post in July 2024 and a new manager is being sought.

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 July 2024

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 **requires improvement to be good**

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

Date of last inspection: 5 December 2023

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

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

At the time of the inspection, two children were living at the home. One was preparing to move to a new placement. Children have lived at the home for some time, and they have formed positive relationships with staff.

One child has made significant progress. They have resumed education and been successful in gaining full-time employment. As a result, they are much more positive about their future.

Staff are creative in encouraging children to engage in cooking healthy meals from scratch. Children help to choose menus from an online fresh food ordering company. Staff then support children to prepare and cook the meals. Children say they are enjoying the experience and trying a wider range of foods.

Staff offer children a wide range of activities. They encourage children to join groups such as gymnastics and have taken children on camping holidays and to a popular holiday park. Other activities children have enjoyed include fishing, going to the gym, boating and paddleboarding.

Staff support children to do voluntary work, including helping with a local visually impaired group and at a cat rescue centre. In addition, children help around the home, cutting the grass and planting vegetables in the home's vegetable plot.

Children are encouraged and helped by staff to explore and be open about their identity. Staff have supported one child to buy and wear clothing they want to wear, have their nails done and wear make-up.

When children become unsettled and voice they wish to move, staff listen to them. This has resulted in plans for one child to move from the home, despite efforts by staff and leaders to help them re-engage. The child has been fully involved in the decision-making and been to visit their new home. This has resulted in a positive ending for the child.

Staff help children to stay in touch with those who are important to them, taking and collecting children no matter the distance and encouraging friends to visit. Staff also remind children about keeping in touch with families, for example calling or messaging a parent on Mother's Day and Father's Day.

Staff build positive relationships with professionals. All professionals spoken to were complimentary about the support and care provided to children and said the home goes above and beyond what is expected.

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

Children are kept safe by staff who know them well.

On occasions, children have gone missing from home. Staff are diligent in their efforts to try and find children. They search for, message and call children. Staff follow children's missing from home plans and liaise well with other professionals. For one child who was missing from home several times, staff and the child's placing authority agreed a support plan. This has led to incidents significantly reducing. When the child is away from the home, staff keep in touch with them via phone. The child's whereabouts are known, as well as who they are with. This helps staff to keep the child safe.

During one incident, a child was able to leave the home at night without staff's knowledge. The manager took action to understand how this happened. The system was checked, and staff were reminded about their responsibilities. As a result, there have been no further occurrences.

There are few incidents at the home and staff have not needed to use physical intervention. This helps demonstrate that children are settled.

Children are helped by staff to understand how to store and administer medication safely. After checking children's knowledge, they are allowed to keep and self-administer medication.

Children take part in training with staff. One child has taken part in first-aid training and passed the course. This has helped provide the child with valuable skills, which they will be able to use into adulthood.

Staff help children to understand risks through conversations and making referrals to other organisations. This has included work with children in relation to smoking cessation, sexual health, stranger awareness and online safety. However, these conversations are not always recorded, and this is a missed opportunity for other staff to understand what has been spoken about and to continue the work already undertaken.

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

Since the registered manager left, the responsible individual has taken over the management of the home while a new manager is recruited.

The responsible individual has high expectations for the management of the home and outcomes for children. When the responsible individual previously identified shortfalls in the management of the home, he provided additional mentoring to the registered manager and set out his expectations.

The responsible individual is knowledgeable about the children and knows them well. One professional commented on how well he knew a child.

The responsible individual has identified areas of improvement and begun to make changes. These changes are in their early stages and need to be fully embedded.

The home has an experienced, stable team of staff who are positive about working at the home. They say they feel supported and listened to. They do not feel the change in management has had a detrimental effect on the children or the care given.

Staff receive supervision and the quality of these is improving. The frequency of supervision is not always in line with the organisation's policy. As a result, not all staff have regular opportunities to reflect on their practice, discuss concerns or have their performance monitored.

Staff are given training opportunities which are relevant to children's needs. However, staff do not always complete training assigned to them promptly. The registered manager's monitoring was not effective in ensuring that staff complete training within timescales. However, the responsible individual is aware of this and has put in place a plan for staff to complete all necessary training.

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 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>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h))</p> <p>This specifically relates to improving monitoring systems in the home to ensure that shortfalls are identified, and improvements made promptly.</p>	<p>20 September 2024</p>

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that, in line with their individual health plans and the ethos of the home, children are offered advice, support and guidance on health and well-being to enhance and supplement that provided by their school through personal, social and health education. Staff should have the relevant skills and knowledge to be able to help children understand, and, where necessary, work to change negative behaviours in key areas of health and well-being such as, but not limited to, nutrition and healthy diet, exercise, mental health, sexual relationships, sexual health, contraception and use of legal highs, drugs, alcohol and tobacco. Specifically, that there are focused sessions which are recorded. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 35, paragraph 7.18)
- The registered person must have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. Specifically, that the frequency of these sessions

is undertaken in line with the organisation's policy. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)

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: Post vacant

Inspector

Debbie Bond, Social Care Inspector

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