

SC065071

Registered provider: Hopscotch Solutions Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home provides care and accommodation for 12 young people who may have an autistic spectrum disorder, learning difficulties, challenging behaviour, ADHD, epilepsy and/or dyspraxia. The home also incorporates a registered school. The home is privately owned and managed.

Inspection dates: 11 to 12 December 2017

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected inadequate

The effectiveness of leaders and managers inadequate

There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded.

Date of last inspection: 23 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is inadequate because:

- On one occasion, children were put at risk of harm as leaders did not follow their safeguarding policy. Managers reinstated a member of staff, who had been suspended due to safeguarding concerns, without consultation with appropriate professionals and before their own internal investigation was concluded.
- Risk management around this member of staff's return to work was poor. Potential risks and the significance of alleged offences were not fully recognised.
- Staff are not confident to report safeguarding concerns to managers.
- There is not a cohesive safeguarding culture across care and education.
- Staff are not reporting hazards found in children's bedrooms.
- An independent visitor, who failed to immediately pass on concerns raised with them, has not been challenged.

The children's home's strengths:

- Children are happy living in this home.
- Creative and inspirational practice helps children to make exceptional progress in many areas.
- Staff understand the way children communicate. This means children feel less frustrated and anxious.
- Children learn how to manage their own behaviour. Behaviour that challenges is understood and managed well by staff.
- Staff have generally warm and supportive relationships with children. They work in partnership with parents.
- Children enjoy a wide range of activities in the home and the community. Children also feel part of the local community because they take part in community events such as litter picking and designing a play area.
- Children's life skills are enhanced within this learning environment. Additionally, older children have the opportunity to complete work experience in the local area.
- Care staff fully support children throughout their day in education.
- Staff have access to good information about children. They are skilled and knowledgeable about the children. They are passionate about providing a high-quality service for children.
- The registered managers are highly motivated and enthusiastic about providing a high standard of care for children. They are already putting plans in place to address the identified shortfalls.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
02/11/2016	Full	Outstanding
07/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
17/11/2015	Full	Outstanding

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, 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>In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must,—</p> <p>if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans; and</p> <p>seek to develop and maintain effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children's home is to provide care and accommodation. (Regulation 5(c)(d))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that the designated officer for the local authority and the police are appropriately consulted about any decisions regarding internal investigations when there are safeguarding concerns. Additionally, ensure that external independent visitors are challenged when complaints made to them are not immediately passed onto the management team.</p>	31/12/2017
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. 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>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</p>	31/12/2017

<p>protection policies; ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and ensure that the effectiveness of the home's child protection policies is monitored regularly. (Regulation 12 (1) and (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)(e))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that there is a robust response to all safeguarding concerns.</p>	
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— That the premises used for the purposes of the home are maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) and (2)(d))</p> <p>In particular, ensure all avoidable hazards are reported and dealt with quickly.</p>	31/12/2017
<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— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13(1)and (2)(g)(ii)(h))</p> <p>In particular, ensure actions are taken swiftly and robustly to prevent further incidents occurring where children are put at risk of harm.</p>	31/12/2017

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Children have been exposed to potentially unsafe situations because staff have not promptly reported safeguarding concerns. When safeguarding concerns were reported, the proper safeguarding procedures were not followed.

Children have a good understanding of the home because they have access to a children's guide that is specifically designed around their preferred way of communicating. For example, there is an interactive visual children's guide that has been designed by the children. Similarly, parents are also provided with a memory stick full of useful information.

Children are happy living in this home. A parent said: 'He enjoys it there.' Staff have warm and supportive relationships with children. This helps children to feel safe and secure.

Children make exceptional progress in areas of their lives such as communication, life skills, decision-making and managing their own behaviour. A parent said: 'He has come on leaps and bounds.'

Children benefit from positive contact with their family and friends. Staff maintain these important links very well. Furthermore, staff ensure that parents feel supported. Staff will travel long distances to support parents in the management of their child's behaviour.

Children are in good health. They have access to any healthcare professionals that they require, including mental health services. Children are helped to attend healthcare appointments by using social stories. Social stories give the children an understanding of what to expect when they go to their appointment. Children are also helped to have a better understanding of sexual health. For example, a nurse visited over a period of three weeks to go through the topic of sexual health with children. The nurse discussed family structures and relationships, sexual relationships, sexually transmitted diseases and consent. The nurse was also able to answer lots of questions from children about topics such as contraception.

Children have good attendance at school. They are fully supported by the care staff throughout their school day. This means children are ready and able to learn.

Children's views and wishes are very important to staff. Staff take every opportunity to listen to children's views. For example, children are encouraged to hang their wishes on a tree, and each month one of the wishes is granted. Children also have visual cues for all aspects of their lives, such as menus, healthy eating and activities.

Children are helped to integrate fully into the local and wider community. For example, children are helping to design a local play area and regularly litter pick in the local village. Children also attend the local coffee morning. This gives them the opportunity to meet and talk to people in the local community.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities. For example, children participate in various clubs in the local community, go on trips to theme parks, go cycling and go to the cinema. They have access to good resources within the home such as arts and crafts materials, game consoles, computers, books and music. Children also enjoy cooking for themselves. During the inspection, children took full advantage of the snow, building a

snowman and throwing snowballs.

Children are helped to be as independent as possible. Staff help them with their life skills such as personal hygiene, and household tasks such as cooking and shopping. Staff are also good at teaching children how to keep themselves safe, and improve their communication skills.

The home is part of a school. Some areas are shared. There is a homely feel to areas that are a designated part of the home. Christmas decorations adorn the communal areas. Bedrooms are small but highly individualised. Some maintenance issues had not been reported or attended to quickly. For example, an older child complained about the smell in her lounge. There was a strong odour. The plan is to change the flooring after Christmas to resolve this issue. However, this was identified as an issue during the inspection so a carpet cleaning company was employed the next day to ensure that the smell was eliminated.

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

Staff are not confident to report safeguarding concerns to managers. This has meant a potential safeguarding risk to children was not promptly addressed. Once the concerns were reported, a member of staff was suspended. However, children were put at risk of harm again because leaders did not follow their safeguarding policy. Leaders did not consult with the appropriate professionals prior to concluding their internal investigation or reinstating the member of staff.

Risk management around this member of staff's return to work was poor. Potential risks linked to an alleged offence were not fully recognised or acknowledged. Leaders relied on the suspended member of staff for crucial information about their current legal status rather than consulting with the appropriate safeguarding agencies.

There has been a lack of governance, accountability and oversight regarding the identified safeguarding concern. Registered managers are not part of the senior leadership team for the school and, therefore, have not been involved in decision-making processes. Senior managers are trained to be designated safeguarding leads. However, they do not meet regularly to review safeguarding concerns. Senior leaders and governors have not met to review the safeguarding policy or look at lessons learned from this issue.

Care and education staff have separate training for safeguarding. This does not create a cohesive safeguarding culture. Care staff have not received any further training about their role in safeguarding children and whistleblowing since this incident was first identified.

Staff are not reporting hazards found in children's bedrooms. A broken cupboard door and toilet seat had not been reported at the time of the inspection. However, these hazards were immediately made safe.

Creative approaches are used to keep children safe. For example, a child who refused to evacuate during a fire drill has become a fire marshal. This has given him a new focus and means he now successfully leaves the building when the fire alarm sounds. Also, a child who enjoys climbing trees now goes to climbing club twice a week so he can climb safely.

Children are helped to have a good understanding of keeping themselves safe while online. For example, children complete worksheets that help to raise their awareness about staying safe while on social media sites. Furthermore, staff are given a guide to social media sites to enable them to identify the sites that children are using.

The police visit the home regularly to help children feel confident in approaching a police officer if they need help. During these visits, children have enjoyed sitting in the police car. The police are planning to visit again to deliver a session to some of the older children about sexual exploitation.

The home have joined a local safe place scheme. This means children can go to certain shops in the local community if they are feeling anxious or upset. The staff in the shop will provide a quiet space and contact the home. This helps children to remain safe when they are out and about.

Staff have a good understanding of why children behave the way they do, what makes them anxious and how to support them through their anxieties. Staff have been trained in de-escalation techniques, as well as restraint. They have also attended training in reducing restraint within the home. This has had a positive impact as there have been no restraints since July.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Leaders and managers have not been effective in managing a safeguarding concern. Furthermore, action taken by leaders and managers has not addressed the immediate concerns well. For example, there has not been:

- staff training
- clarification of safeguarding roles and responsibilities
- focused safeguarding meetings between managers
- a review of lessons learned
- a review of the safeguarding policy.

However, The registered managers are highly motivated and enthusiastic about getting it right for children. They are determined to ensure that quick, effective action is taken to prevent a recurrence of poor practice.

Two registered managers lead this home through a job-share arrangement. Both hold the level 5 diploma in leadership and management. They are relatively new to the role of registered manager but have a lot of experience of working with children. They are creative and inspirational in the way that they implement research-based care practice.

They continually strive to improve the service offered to children.

Staff are passionate about providing a high standard of care for children. A parent said: 'I am impressed with the level of care. Everyone who works with my child has his best interests at heart.' Staff either hold an appropriate qualification or are undertaking one. They have access to a good training programme. This ensures that they are fully equipped to provide good quality care. However, they have not refreshed their safeguarding training in response to identified safeguarding shortfalls.

External professionals and parents generally talk about good communication between themselves and staff. However, communication with safeguarding agencies has been poor in one case.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC065071

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: Hopscotch Solutions Limited

Registered provider address: 1 Merchant Place, River Street, Bolton BL2 1BX

Responsible individual: Charles Tosan

Registered managers: Kirsty Truesdale, Emma Nicholson

Inspector

Joanne Vyas, social care inspector

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