

# 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 autism, learning difficulties, challenging behaviour, ADHD, epilepsy and dyspraxia. The home also incorporates a registered full-time school. The home is privately owned.

**Inspection dates:** 6 to 7 February 2018

**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:** 11 December 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** inadequate

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Key findings from this inspection

This children's home requires improvement to be good because:

- Although progress has been made to improve safeguarding systems since the home was judged inadequate in December 2017, staff do not yet have a thorough understanding of the sort of concerns they should report through the

whistleblowing process.

- Risk assessments are not reviewed and updated after serious incidents.
- Some staff carry around large bunches of keys that jangle and may present as a hazard while supporting children.

The children's home's strengths:

- The registered managers are passionate about improving the service and are starting to identify and address shortfalls. They inspire and motivate their team to provide improved care for children.
- Since the last inspection, staff have undertaken substantial training around keeping children safe. This has given staff a better understanding of safeguarding.
- Children make significant progress. This is particularly evident in their life skills and in how they become better at managing their own behaviour.
- The wishes, views and feelings of children are very important to staff.
- Staff have warm and supportive relationships with children.

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/12/2017	Full	Inadequate
23/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
02/11/2016	Full	Outstanding
07/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness

## What does the children's home need to do to improve?

### Recommendations

- Staff need the knowledge and skills to recognise and be alert to any signs that might indicate a child is in any way at risk of harm. The registered person should ensure that skills in safeguarding are gained, refreshed and recorded in the home's workforce plan. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.12)
- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9) This specifically refers to staff who have a large bunch of keys attached to their clothing.
- Staff should continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- Case records must be kept up to date and signed and dated by the author of each entry. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)

### Inspection judgements

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

Children are not yet fully protected from harm because staff do not have a thorough understanding of the whistle-blowing policy.

Large bunches of keys that hang from the clothing of staff could be a hazard to children while they are being supported. Furthermore, the noise that the keys make as staff walk around is not conducive to a low-arousal environment and may cause distress for some children with autism.

Children continue to make significant progress in developing their life skills and in the management of their own behaviour. A social worker said: 'I've just seen him flourishing since he's been here.' Children who are currently struggling with anxiety are being supported by staff who know them very well and are helping them through a difficult period in their lives. Children continue to be happy in this home.

The wishes, views and feelings of children are very important to staff. Staff use a range of communication tools and imaginative ways to help all children express their views, wishes and feelings, including children who are unable to express themselves verbally. These include pictures, simple sign language and objects that represent an activity. Staff know the children very well and have an innate understanding of what children are saying. Children are also given information that is in a format they can understand. For

example, children have pictures of staff who are on duty and who are working with them. The 'Wish Tree' is a fun way for children's wishes to be expressed and granted.

Children have lots of opportunities to practise life skills, from shopping and cooking to using the toilet appropriately. These skills help children to successfully move into adulthood. A parent said: 'They have supported her need to be more independent and now she takes control of buying her shopping and cooking for the other residents in the cottage. She completes chores willingly and is being encouraged to know when to take her medication.' Furthermore, children are supported to take part in work experience, such as working in stables or a charity shop. This equips children with essential work skills. It also gives them a sense of achievement, improving their self-esteem and confidence.

Children are helped to be healthy. They are encouraged to eat a healthy diet. For example, children have free access to a bowl of fruit throughout the day. Children also have access to healthcare professionals, including a play therapist and a speech and language therapist. The management of medication is safe, and staff help children to have a good understanding of any medication that they are prescribed.

Children attend the onsite school and mostly have good attendance levels. Care staff support children throughout the education day so that consistent approaches are maintained. This helps children to better access their learning.

Children are very well supported to maintain contact with people who are important to them, such as their families. A parent said: 'They proactively encourage both myself and my son's extended family to participate in his life. We are welcome at all times and for any length of time. This has helped enormously in my son maintaining his family support structure.' Parents feel valued and feel that their views matter. They also agree that staff communicate effectively with them. This ensures that parents feel part of their child's life. A parent said: 'They are particularly good at keeping and sending me photographic records of life's milestones, such as my son's first shave or a visit to the seaside, or even just my son enjoying playing the drums at his music sessions. These are all precious moments which I would otherwise lose.'

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

Proactive measures to reduce risks to children and the general public are not always taken. Risk assessments are not reviewed and updated after serious incidents, which would help to reduce risks and enable children to continue to access the local and wider community. Furthermore, risk assessments are not signed by the author and dates are not specific.

Staff have a better understanding of how to keep children safe than they had at the previous inspection. They know how to report concerns. However, a recent survey suggests that some staff are only 'likely' to report concerns about staff and children. This lack of certainty indicates that staff are not yet fully confident about reporting safeguarding concerns. Additionally, staff do not have a thorough understanding about what sort of concerns they might report through the whistle-blowing procedure.

Safeguarding children is now high on the agenda and discussed at all meetings, from senior leadership meetings to individual staff supervision meetings. All reported

safeguarding concerns are discussed within the senior leadership team and carefully targeted interventions are constructed. Good safeguarding policies are followed; for example, external safeguarding agencies are now informed and consulted appropriately.

Creative and positive strategies help to keep children safe. For example, a child created a football scene halfway up the stairs. He is very proud of his construction and it has stopped him from jumping over the bannister. Staff are trained in de-escalating potentially dangerous behaviour. Staff rarely need to restrain children because they know them very well, have good strategies pertinent to the individual child, and have warm and supportive relationships with children.

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

Comprehensive training and guidance provided for staff over the last eight weeks has given them a better understanding of reporting procedures for any concerns that they may have about the safety and welfare of children. Education and care staff now complete safeguarding training together. This provides staff with a more rounded experience and helps all staff to work together. However, these improvements are not yet embedded fully. Staff do not yet have a thorough understanding of what sort of concerns they would report through the whistle-blowing policy. In addition, they are not yet saying they are fully confident in reporting concerns.

The registered managers are passionate about improving the service. They are now part of the senior leadership team. This has given them more autonomy, enabling them to make informed decisions. They are starting to identify and address shortfalls. For example, they have made good links with external agencies, such as the adult safeguarding team and the designated officer for the local authority. They inspire and motivate their team to provide improved care for children. Staff feel very well supported by them, and receive regular and formal supervision that includes reflecting on practice. This helps staff to look at what went well and what can be done better, helping to improve the safety and well-being of children.

## **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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