

SC038435

Registered provider: Sunfield Children's Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is part of a residential special school. Since May 2017, it has been a subsidiary of the Ruskin Mill Trust.

The registered manager holds a BA Hons degree in social welfare and is qualified to level 4 in leadership and management. She was registered with Ofsted in April 2018.

The home is registered to accommodate up to 61 children with severe and complex learning difficulties and behavioural needs, including seven placements for children who require short breaks. There are eight houses within the grounds of the school. At the time of this inspection, they were accommodating 23 children.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

Inspection dates: 12 to 13 May 2021

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 **good**

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

Date of last inspection: 9 October 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: declined in effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/10/2019	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
19/06/2019	Full	Good
26/09/2018	Full	Good
31/05/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff sensitively support children to move into, and out of, the home. Prior to any move, staff develop a detailed plan in partnership with all key individuals involved. This plan is specific to the child. For example, before a child moves on from the home when they reach the age of 18, staff from the adult services come and work at the home. This gives them the opportunity to build a relationship with the child while working alongside experienced staff who know the child well. As a result, children's moves from the home have been successful, and they have settled quickly into their new home.

Staff build trusting relationships with children. They help them to feel safe by enabling them to communicate their needs. This helps to stabilise children's emotions and behaviours. Children engage in key-work sessions using symbols and pictures. They have opportunities to express their wishes and feelings about what they enjoy. All children have access to an independent advocate to enable them to share any concerns.

Internal care plans are well written, with clear objectives for children to progress and achieve. However, local authority paperwork is not always available to staff on the children's files. The home's managers are chasing social workers for missing documents. However, they are not escalating concerns to social workers' line managers when these documents are not forthcoming. This could mean that the longer-term aims of plans and the needs of children are not clear.

Children live busy, healthy lifestyles. They are encouraged to eat healthily, take regular exercise and develop their self-care. They are enjoying the farm, footpaths around the grounds and new outdoor gardens and learning spaces. Access to a variety of activities, seasonal celebrations and work opportunities improves their confidence, social skills and social inclusion.

Children attend the organisation's school on site. Care and education staff work together with parents to ensure that they support local authority education, health and care plans. The service provides well for the need for children to learn through play. Indoor and outdoor equipment, toys and resources keep children busy and ensure that they have fun.

Considerable work has been completed to successfully improve the standard of decor, furniture and accommodation across the site. There are now only two houses awaiting refurbishment. There is a clear development plan in place with dates to complete this work.

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

Careful assessment and planning mean that staff understand children's risks and work to reduce them. No child goes out alone, but all children benefit from an

approach to risk management that enhances their independence according to their ability and understanding.

Children feel safe living at this home. Staff know them well and strive to keep them safe from harm. Systems for safeguarding children are in place, including a safeguarding group that meets to review and learn lessons from any incidents or allegations. The senior leadership team implements effective staff disciplinary processes and conducts thorough internal investigations under the direction of the safeguarding designated officer. Staff are trained and confident in their responsibilities, including around whistle-blowing.

Staff develop their knowledge and understanding of children. They have insight into triggers that might result in a challenging situation or an increase in the likelihood that a child or staff member might struggle to cope. In such situations, staff provide reassurance to the child. As a result, consequences are not used. Occurrences and patterns of physical interventions are monitored. Focused interventions, involving the psychologist, see reductions in these events for most children over time. There have been no incidents where a child has gone missing from care, because staff follow procedures effectively.

Managers and staff acknowledge that there are occasions when children's behaviours escalate, or they experience crisis. Staff identify risks to children and staff and follow procedures to raise concerns. However, there have been occasions when staff have felt that the senior leadership team has been slow to respond to the concerns they raise and have not listened to staff's professional insight and knowledge of the children. A recent concern has resulted in one staff team raising a formal complaint. The senior leadership team is taking this seriously and is in the process of investigating the complaint and reaching a resolution. The senior leadership team has taken actions to support the child concerned. However, this disconnect between the senior leadership team, the house managers and some staff teams during periods of crisis is a concern. A lack of effective communication and support fails to reassure some staff or make them feel valued and listen to.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Managers and leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths of the service and the areas for further development. They use development plans, complaints and internal and external quality assurance systems to monitor and improve their practice, staff practice and outcomes for children.

Where the senior leadership team identifies areas for development, there is clear evidence that the strategies it puts in place bring about improvements. For example, senior leaders recognise the importance of parents and family members in the lives of children. The senior leadership team continues to invest in on-site accommodation and spaces where children, parents and family members can spend quality time together. These visits are sensitively and successfully supported by staff.

The registered manager, house managers and staff teams work in close partnership with a psychologist, a consultant psychiatrist, speech and language therapists and the education staff from the on-site school. Children can access therapeutic movement, massage, art therapy, music therapy and colour light therapy. This ensures that children's needs are met holistically. Staff are very committed and provide a good level of care to children. They are able to confidently demonstrate the positive impact that living in the home is having on each child's progress.

Each house staff team is supported by a house manager. The staff teams make good use of weekly team meetings, handovers and supervisions to reflect on practice. This creates consistent practice and, in most houses, ensures that communication is shared between the house and the senior leadership team.

Staff receive good-quality induction and mandatory training that equip them to meet the needs of the children they care for. The senior leadership team uses feedback from staff to regularly review and revise this training. There is a process to identify additional staff training needs, specific to any new child moving into the home. However, in one case this has not resulted in the staff team receiving the required training. As a result, that staff team do not have the highest level of understanding of the children in their care.

There are established and on-going staff recruitment procedures to ensure sufficient and consistent staff to support children. The use of a small group of regular agency staff continues to be a strategy utilised by the senior leadership team to achieve this goal. These staff are linked to house teams and are valued by the permanent workforce.

Although supervision and mandatory training are available to agency staff, they are not systematically completing the newly revised induction, which is valued by the permanent staff. This induction is specific to this home and would further enhance the understanding of agency staff around the ethos and approaches of the service.

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, and must ensure that staff—</p> <p>if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority’s or a relevant person’s performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child’s needs are met in accordance with the child’s relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (c))</p> <p>This specifically relates to managers escalating concerns with the placing authority social workers’ line managers when documents continue not to be shared.</p>	31 July 2021
<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>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c))</p> <p>This specifically relates to ensuring that staff receive training that is specific to an individual child’s needs.</p>	31 July 2021
<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>	31 July 2021

promotes their welfare.

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—

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.

(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a))

This specifically relates to communication between staff and managers to ensure that support is provided to staff and children in times of crisis.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the use of external agency staff is a positive choice to complement the skills and experiences of the permanent workforce. The registered person should consider their skills and any induction necessary before they commence work in the home. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 54, paragraph 10.16)
- The registered person should continue to ensure that the children’s home is a nurturing and supportive environment that meets the needs of children. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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: SC038435

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: Sunfield Children's Homes Limited

Registered provider address: Ruskin Mill, Millbottom, Nailsworth, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL6 0LA

Responsible individual: Leigh Bown

Registered manager: Sarah Marshall

Inspectors

Dawn Bennett, Social Care Inspector
Michelle Spruce, Social Care Inspector
Gareth Leckey, 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
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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