

2784702

Registered provider: Surrey County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children’s home

This home is owned and run by a local authority. The home is registered to provide care for up to four children who experience emotional and/or social difficulties. Three children were living at the home at the time of the inspection.

The home was registered with Ofsted in April 2024, and the registered manager has been in post since that date.

This is the first inspection of the home since registration.

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 December 2024

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: not previously inspected

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Inspection judgements

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

When children come to live in the home, managers consider a range of information and complete assessments that consider their needs. However, some of these lack full information about children and consideration of any specific training needs for staff. Consequently, staff have not always had a comprehensive understanding of children when they arrived and have sometimes felt unprepared.

Children enjoy warm and nurturing relationships with staff who talk about children, and to them, with care and respect. Staff understand the barriers children face because of their experiences and appreciate the importance of setting realistic targets for children. They can identify progress each child has made from their own individual starting point.

Children say that staff listen to them and support them with the things they need help with. Staff involve children in their own placement planning process and in things such as activity or menu planning. This helps children to feel valued.

Staff have not yet been able to find suitable education placements for children. Managers are working with education professionals to try and progress children's plans for education. They are proactive in exploring alternative options that are age-appropriate and targeted to children's strengths and interests. In the meantime, staff work hard to try and engage children in a structured plan of daily activities.

Children are supported to keep in touch and spend time with family members in line with their relevant plans. For all three children, the move to the home has brought them back into their home community. For two of them, this has helped them to see family members more. This supports children's sense of identity and belonging.

Staff work with children to encourage and support their independence skills, such as shopping, cooking and self-care. For one child, there has been a delay in allocating them a personal adviser and creating their pathway plan. There is no evidence of managers providing timely challenge to the placing authority about these delays, which weakens support for the child to prepare for the future.

Managers and staff have ensured that the communal areas of the home are clean and in good repair. Children enjoy the use of a large garden, although one area of this needs attention so it can be used for the benefit of all children. There are no photos of the children or displays of their activities and achievements in communal areas. Staff support children to personalise their rooms in some ways, but leaders have not given permission for them to have them repainted if they wish. This undermines efforts to help children have ownership of their environment and to feel heard.

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

Children say they feel safe. They know how to make a complaint and feel able to talk to staff about worries. Managers and staff have a good understanding of the children and their vulnerabilities, and staff who were spoken to understand their safeguarding responsibilities.

There have been concerns about one child going missing from home. When this has happened, staff have followed missing-from-care protocols for the child and have been proactive in trying to locate them. Staff have safety plans in place in relation to the children's vulnerability in the community. However, the procedures for staff to take are not clear in all circumstances, and the plans do not capture agreements made about the expectations of other agencies. This means that staff may not always be clear about the actions to take and what has been agreed with partner agencies.

Staff understand that children often communicate through their behaviour, and they are guided to take a supportive approach if children show behaviours of distress. This helps to reduce the need for physical interventions, of which there has been one since the home opened. Managers understand the importance of having oversight of incidents, and this has improved. Recent incidents show consistent oversight and action being taken to address issues arising to help support the children.

On one occasion, when a child had been involved in an accident and was in hospital, staff did not arrange to go and be with them and bring them home. The child did not experience the care and nurture they needed. Managers have not taken action to address this.

Managers understand the role of the local authority designated officer and involve them when there are allegations against staff. However, this is not always done in a timely way in line with the provider's policy. Robust decisions about managing risks are not always made. Managers do not have a clear system for recording each allegation and the action taken. These shortfalls weaken systems for protecting children from unsafe staff practice and protecting the rights of staff.

Systems for managing medication and for monitoring health and safety in the home are secure. The registered manager took swift action following a medication error. As a result, there has been no recurrence.

When new staff come to work in the home, managers carry out a range of safer recruitment checks. This helps to ensure that children are cared for by safe people.

Bedroom door alarms are used. Written consent is provided for these from the placing authority, and their use is for safeguarding purposes. However, there is not a

system in place to review their use to ensure that it remains necessary and proportionate for each child.

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

The home is led by a suitably qualified and experienced registered manager. They are enthusiastic about their role and about outcomes for children. They have a thoughtful approach to the support of staff and creative ideas for improving this. This makes them a good role model for staff.

Leaders have not ensured that there has been consistently good enough management oversight in the period since the home opened. Changes in senior management, the departure of deputy managers and sickness of the registered manager have impacted on this and, in turn, on the progress made in establishing a strong and stable team. This is reflected in things such as late safeguarding notifications and delayed action in response to the report of the independent visitor. There have recently been two new deputies appointed and a change in senior management arrangements, which have improved support for the registered manager, but it is too early to see the impact of this.

Staff describe the registered manager as supportive and helpful. However, the issues with oversight and leadership have impacted on the registered manager's ability to ensure that staff receive the right support. Staff supervision has not been taking place in line with company policy, including for staff who are on probation. The workforce development plan has not been updated to inform support. This undermines efforts to build staff confidence and resilience. Managers are aware of this shortfall and have begun to take action to address it.

Social care professionals are positive about the care provided by staff and their communication. Managers take part in multi-agency forums to review safety plans and manage risk collaboratively when needed. On two occasions, police did not accept a missing-from-home report, and return home interviews have not always been carried out by the placing authority following missing-from-home episodes. There is no evidence of managers challenging these responses to try and ensure consistently helpful responses for children.

Managers have effective systems in place to oversee staff training, which is helping to ensure that children are cared for by well-informed staff.

Managers understand the importance of consistency of staffing for children. There is some use of agency staff, but there has been active recruitment to address vacancies. When agency staff are used, they are alongside staff who the children know to ensure that children's care is led by staff they have a relationship with.

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>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>understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home;</p> <p>demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on—</p> <p>feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(f)(g)(ii))</p> <p>In particular, this refers to ensuring that there is consistency of oversight across the service, staff supervision, challenge to partner agencies and addressing concerns about staff practice.</p>	<p>31 January 2025</p>
<p>The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p>	<p>31 January 2025</p>

<p>understand the children’s home’s overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;</p> <p>use this understanding to deliver care that meets children’s needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to—</p> <p>meet the needs of each child; and</p> <p>enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(i)(ii))</p> <p>In particular, this relates to allowing children to fully personalise their rooms and upkeep of all outside space.</p>	
<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>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home’s child protection policies;</p> <p>that the effectiveness of the home’s child protection policies is monitored regularly. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(v)(vii)(e))</p> <p>In particular, this refers to the management and recording of allegations against staff and the quality of safety plans for children.</p>	<p>31 January 2025</p>

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that assessments completed to inform decisions about children coming to live in the home give full consideration to their needs and how staff will be supported to understand and meet these. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)
- The registered person should ensure that staff celebrate children and their achievements by displaying them in the home for children to see. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 31, paragraph 6.7)
- The registered person should ensure that the use of electronic door alarms is regularly reviewed, involving parents, children (if possible) and social workers to consider if it continues to be necessary for safeguarding purposes in accordance with regulation 24. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.16)

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: 2784702

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Surrey County Council

Registered provider address: Quadrant Court, 35 Guildford Road, Woking GU22 7QQ

Responsible individual: Post vacant

Registered manager: Vincent White

Inspectors

Jacob Robson, Social Care Inspector
Peter Jackson, Social Care Inspector

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