

SC361167

Registered provider: Options Autism (5) Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This service provides care for children and young people with autism spectrum disorders. The children and young people may also have additional medical and/or complex needs.

This setting is an independent residential special school registered as a children's home. It is owned and operated by a private company. The service offers specialised education, and care for up to 22 children, which includes up to three children and young people under short-break arrangements. Some young people stay until they have completed their education at age 19 years.

The registered manager resigned on 30 November 2020. The deputy manager is in day-to-day charge of the home and is in the process of undertaking her registration with Ofsted.

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.

We last visited this setting on 4 February 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on Ofsted's website.

Inspection dates: 4 to 5 August 2021

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 widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded, and the care and

experiences of children and young people are poor and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 22 October 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/10/2019	Full	Good
27/06/2018	Full	Good
14/11/2017	Full	Good
16/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Serious and widespread concerns, including poor safeguarding arrangements in the home, mean that children are not kept safe, and their welfare and progress are compromised. As a result of the inspection, a notice of suspension was issued such was the concern for risks to children's safety and wellbeing.

Staff do not have the required knowledge and skills to promote children's welfare and keep them safe. In part, this is because they have not received the required training to undertake their role, and staff receive poor guidance and direction from managers. Furthermore, there is not enough staff to care for and supervise the children. Staff report that they often work below the required staff levels. The quality and availability of staff mean that children receive an inconsistent and poor quality of care.

Staff shortages mean that there is limited capacity to take children out of the home to complete planned activities. As a result, children are restricted to spending most of their time in the home or its grounds. Children therefore miss out on the opportunity to socialise and enjoy new experiences.

The home is dirty, hazardous and poorly maintained. Some areas of the home have an offensive smell because of the poor cleanliness. One child's bedroom shower panel is damaged, while other bathrooms are mouldy. In other areas, the flooring is peeling away and becoming a trip hazard. Inspectors also found that the sensory rooms, which should be relaxing and therapeutic spaces for children, were dirty and uninviting. The home does not provide children with a clean, homely and welcoming place to live.

The arrangements for the administration and management of medication are unsafe. Staff do not have the requisite training to meet the needs of children living in the home and keep them safe. This includes training to be able to deliver emergency rescue medication to children who have epilepsy. Furthermore, staff lack knowledge of children's medication needs. For example, one member of staff working with a child was not aware that the child required rescue medication. This left the child at risk of serious harm.

Children's views and wishes are not always considered, sought or listened to by staff. This is because staff do not encourage children to use their preferred communication systems. Furthermore, the manager's poor oversight means that not all staff are trained to communicate with children who do not have verbal communication skills. This limits children's ability to communicate with staff.

Despite these shortfalls, feedback from some parents was positive. One parent told the inspector, 'Over last year he has been able to regulate himself. This is a big

achievement, now wearing underwear, socks, shoes, and brushing his teeth. This is a big thing. He has become more understanding and he is moving to another setting [operated by the provider].'

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

Safeguarding arrangements in the home are inadequate. Staff do not understand children's vulnerabilities. Furthermore, staff lack the skills and knowledge to keep children safe.

Managers do not have a good enough overview of care practices in the home. For example, one child has suffered an injury from climbing a fence at the home. This child continues to receive ongoing medical treatment to tend to these injuries. There have been five other incidents of the child climbing fences across the children's home grounds. Furthermore, concerns regarding the fencing were raised at the monitoring visit in February 2021. This was because a different child had fallen after climbing a fence and suffered an injury. A requirement was raised to address this shortfall but managers have not acted to make the fencing safe to prevent future occurrences.

Children's risk assessments and behaviour management plans do not cover all known risks and do not set out clear guidance for staff to follow. This does not promote children's safety and welfare. This lack of clear guidance and training for staff leaves children at risk of harm. This includes a lack of training for staff in using physical interventions to be able to manage children's behaviours safely.

One child, known to have a risk of using ligatures to self-harm, is supported on a one-to-one staffing ratio. However, the member of staff assigned to support him has not received any training in self-harm, and specifically in how to reduce and manage the risk of ligatures. The sufficiency of appropriately trained and skilled staff in the home is of significant concern and leaves children at risk of harm.

Managers have failed to ensure that anyone living, visiting, or working at the home is adequately protected in the event of a fire. Specifically, recommendations from the fire risk assessment, completed in October 2020, have not been met. During the inspection, Ofsted informed the local fire officer, who visited the site on 5 August 2021. The fire officer completed an initial assessment of the fire safety of the home, and concluded that the fire safety arrangements in place were sufficient. A further visit by the fire and rescue service to assess the fire arrangements in the home was scheduled for the coming weeks.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The registered manager resigned in November 2020. The previous deputy manager is in day-to-day charge of the home. She is in the process of registering with Ofsted. The manager does not have a suitable qualification. She is working towards the level 5 diploma in leadership and management in residential childcare.

Leaders and managers, including senior leaders, have not demonstrated that they have the required skills and capacity to oversee this home. Managers do not recognise areas of concern and, as a result, do not act to address them. This means children are at risk of harm and are not meeting their potential.

Managers have not had a good enough oversight of the quality of care provided to children. During the inspection, information submitted to inspectors by managers was either incorrect or not provided. This included basic information such as the staff rota and their training records. This demonstrates the disorganised and ineffective approach of the leadership team.

Children's case records, including the plans staff should follow to understand how to meet the needs of children, are not up to date or well organised. Managers have failed to review the quality of case records to ensure that staff are given clear guidance to meet children's needs and understand how to protect them. This demonstrates that managers have not assured themselves that children are being safeguarded.

Managers do not keep training records up to date. During the inspection, inspectors made several requests to review the staff training matrix. When it was provided, it did not include a list of all the mandatory training. As a result, inspectors were unable to identify if staff had sufficient training in first aid, administration of medication or food hygiene. This means that staff do not have the requisite skills to care for children safely.

Some staff, including staff from external agencies, who have worked in the home for more than two years have not achieved the required qualification. This contributes to staff not having the appropriate skills, experience and qualification to perform their duties.

The manager has not ensured that the statement of purpose is accurate or up to date. For example, the list of staff who are named as working in the home is inaccurate. This means that children, parents and partner agencies are not given accurate information about the care that will be offered to their children.

Staff do not receive regular supervision and some staff have not received their annual appraisal. This means that staff are not provided with sufficient support and opportunities to develop their practice.

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>The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that staff—</p> <p>ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child's best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare; and</p> <p>help each child to express views, wishes and feelings. (Regulation 7 (1)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that staff gain children's views and wishes.</p>	<p>17 September 2021</p>
<p>The enjoyment and achievement standard is that children take part in and benefit from a variety of activities that meet their needs and develop and reflect their creative, cultural, intellectual, physical and social interests and skills.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff help each child to—</p> <p>make a positive contribution to the home and the wider community; and</p> <p>that each child has access to a range of activities that enable the child to pursue the child's interests and hobbies.</p>	<p>17 September 2021</p>

<p>(Regulation 9 (1) (2)(a)(iii)(b))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that staff provide opportunities for children to access the community.</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>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; and</p> <p>that the home’s day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm; and</p> <p>that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child’s health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(b)(d))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that the home and grounds are maintained to protect each child from avoidable hazards to their health and safety.</p>	<p>31 August 2021</p>
<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; and</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.</p>	<p>31 August 2021</p>

<p>(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(h))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that the quality of care provided to children is monitored.</p>	
<p>The care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that each child’s relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14 (1)(a) (2)(c))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that staff follow children’s care plans and keep them up to date.</p>	<p>17 September 2021</p>
<p>The registered person must compile in relation to the children’s home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1.</p> <p>The registered person must—</p> <p>keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and</p> <p>notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (1) (3)(a)(b))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that the statement of purpose is kept up to date.</p>	<p>17 September 2021</p>
<p>The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children’s home.</p> <p>In particular the registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>medicines kept in the home are stored in a secure place so as to prevent any child from having unsupervised access to them. (Regulation 23 (1) (2)(a))</p>	<p>17 September 2021</p>

<p>This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that staff follow the home's procedures and are suitably trained to administer medication.</p>	
<p>After consultation with the fire and rescue authority, the registered person must—</p> <p>take adequate precautions against the risk of fire, including the provision of suitable fire equipment in the children's home.</p> <p>If the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005(a) applies to the home—</p> <p>the registered person must ensure that the requirements of that Order and any regulations made under it, except for article 23 (duties of employees), are complied with in respect of the home. (Regulation 25 (1)(a) (2)(b))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005(a) is complied with.</p>	<p>17 September 2021</p>
<p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.</p> <p>The registered person may only—</p> <p>employ an individual to work at the children's home; or</p> <p>if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home,</p> <p>if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3).</p> <p>The requirements are that—</p> <p>the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform.</p> <p>For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained—</p>	<p>17 September 2021</p>

<p>the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ('the Level 3 Diploma'); or</p> <p>a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma.</p> <p>The relevant date is—</p> <p>in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home; or</p> <p>in the case of an individual who was working in a care role in a home on 1st April 2014, 1st April 2016. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(b) (4)(a)(b)) (5)(a)(b))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that staff are suitably qualified, skilled and experienced.</p>	
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and</p> <p>have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)(c))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that staff receive regular supervision and an annual appraisal.</p>	<p>17 September 2021</p>

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: SC361167

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: Options Autism (5) Limited

Registered provider address: Atria, Spa Road, Bolton BL1 4AG

Responsible individual: Ann Adams

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Michelle Spruce, Social Care Inspector

James Tallis, Social Care Inspector

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