

1227060

Registered provider: Cambian Autism Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is in the grounds of a residential special school. A private company manages both the school and the home. It provides care for up to six children. The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this home. At the time, three children were living in the home and the inspectors spoke to all of them.

Residential placements are usually for 38 or 52 weeks of the year. The school also provides education for day pupils. The children have learning disabilities and/or autism.

The registered manager has been in post since January 2022.

Inspection dates: 11 and 13 March 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 19 December 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/12/2023	Full	Good
23/05/2022	Full	Good
08/02/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
14/01/2020	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

When children come to the home they stay for years. This provides them with stability and a sense of belonging, which underpins the progress they make. Staff take the time to build trusting relationships with the children. Children say that they have someone they can talk to when they need help, that staff will listen to them and offer support.

All the children are making good progress at school. For two of the children, going to school daily has addressed significant gaps in their learning. Children plan and aspire for their future. The manager and staff support this, helping when there are issues to overcome. For example, the manager challenged a college when they declined a child's application. A meeting was arranged so the child could meet the college staff so they could understand the child's needs. This led to the offer of a place for the next academic year, helping the child achieve their future goals.

Children have opportunities to be involved in activities in which they are interested. One child goes axe throwing, which they say helps them manage their feelings. Another child has been helped to link in with a local football team, as football is their passion. All the children learn new skills and help take care of the house Guinea pigs. These experiences help develop skills that they will take into their adulthood.

The views and opinions of the children matter. When there are issues which are not agreed, an independent advocate will come and share children's views with the wider professional team. For example, one child wanted to have more than thirty-eight weeks at the home. The Local Authority would not agree to this. However, the compromise reached has allowed for some extra time in the home. This has made a significant difference for the child, who sees the home as their main home and wants to be there most of the time.

Children stay connected with people who are important to them, such as family. Relationships between staff and families are positive. Parents know that their children are being well cared for and that all essential information is shared. One parent said their child sees the children's home as their actual home and their family home is their holiday home. This speaks volumes about how settled this child is.

Moves in and out of the home are well planned. The initial assessments consider the needs of the children and how the staff will be able to meet these. However, they lack detail about the impact the children may have on each other and the group dynamic. Despite this, there have been successful moves into the home with children settling well, as they have had opportunities to meet everyone and get to know them.

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

Children are seen as the experts of their lives and their opinions are important. As a result, two of the three children have been involved in writing their behaviour plans. This gave them the opportunity to tell staff how best to support them when they are upset, feeling angry or stressed. This has lessened challenges around behaviour because staff follow the advice given to them by the children.

When children are experiencing issues such as self-harm they are well supported. Staff are not afraid to talk about feelings to understand why children self-harm. Practical support is also provided, including seeking medical advice or emotional support from the on-site clinical team or Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. This helps children learn other strategies to cope with feelings.

There has been one incident where a member of staff did not follow the agreed plan for a child. This led to an avoidable incident of a child harming themselves. The manager has taken steps to address this, including more stringent strategies in place for items that could be used to self-harm and support for the member of staff with more training and supervision.

Children can explore gender fluidity without fear or judgement. Staff are respectful of chosen pronouns. Support is available more widely through the on-site school in which there is an LGBTQ group that children can go to. This encourages children to explore their identity, promoting acceptance within the home and between the children, who understand differences.

The daily records vary in content and quality. Some staff are good at being able to describe what children have done with their day and things of which they are proud. Other records are not as informative. Language can also vary, with some slips into professional terms that are not helpful to the child. This does not help children understand their journey in care.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager promotes a positive culture in the home. He achieves this through knowing the children well, encouraging their views and developing positive relationships with each other. He is also supportive of the staff, being available when they have questions or need advice. He inspires the team to have a meaningful impact on children.

Professional feedback is positive. They like the child-centred approach from staff and how they advocate on behalf of children, ensuring that their voices are heard. Information is shared seamlessly, ensuring a consistent approach from the team around the child.

Staff understand the needs of the children. They care plan together as a team, discussing how best to care for children. This benefits the children, who experience a consistent approach to their care. Staff understand the importance of talking to help the

children. However, one child identified that they struggle to communicate with some staff when they have English as their second language. The child has raised their concern about this, but leaders have made little progress in supporting staff to develop their skills so they can effectively communicate with all the children. Also, some of the newer staff have needed encouragement to talk to the children in a deeper way. This prevents children from having important conversations with anyone in the home at any time.

All staff have the skills needed to look after the children well. This is supported by a comprehensive induction and training programme, with continuing professional development. Staff value the help they have from the manager and leadership team. Team meetings are well attended. The manager uses them as opportunities for extra training on several topics. The sister home is also involved, promoting positive working relationships, time for reflection and information-sharing.

However, some staff were not able to describe the full whistle-blowing process despite a recent refresher, to demonstrate that they understand the steps they would take to keep the children safe. Also, three staff have a level three in adult care. The provider was not able to show they had considered whether this was equal to the required children's qualification, meaning these staff remain unqualified.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
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 staff— 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. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i))	14 May 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff learn the home's internal whistle-blowing procedures through the induction process. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.9)
- The registered person's workforce plan should include development strategies to support staff when there are barriers that impact on their verbal communication with children. The plan should detail the process for managing and improving poor performance. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)
- The registered person should also establish whether the units completed in the candidate's original qualification have content which corresponds with the units of the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare; and/or the Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management for Residential Childcare. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 68, paragraph 1.2)
- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion, and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

- The registered person should only accept placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs as recorded in the child's relevant plans and where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)

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: 1227060

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: Cambian Autism Services Limited

Registered provider address: Metropolitan House, 3 Darkes Lane, Potters Bar EN6 1AG

Responsible individual: Samantha Campbell

Registered manager: Romuald Stysial

Inspectors

Miriam Dolman, Social Care Inspector
Tenji Wesa, Social Care Inspector

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