

1236450

Registered provider: Caretech Community Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is operated by a private provider. It provides a specialist service for up to five children who have learning disabilities and/or experience emotional and behavioural difficulties.

At the time of the inspection, five children were living in the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in Sept 2024.

This inspection was brought forward in order to address specific concerns or allegations received by Ofsted. No evidence was found to support the complaint.

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 October 2024

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: 10 October 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/10/2023	Full	Good
03/07/2023	Full	Inadequate
07/09/2022	Full	Good
07/02/2022	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The staff provide a nurturing and stimulating environment where children are encouraged to have fun. The children take part in a range of daily activities. After school, the staff lead engaging sessions that promote social interaction, creativity and physical play. The children enjoy activities such as painting, messy play, sensory baths and time in the garden. The home's atmosphere is positive with lots of laughter throughout the home.

Staff understand the individual communication needs of the children. Staff ensure that the children are provided with choices. High levels of staff supervision are maintained, enabling children to move freely and safely around the home and the large, enclosed gardens. This approach promotes independence and decision-making skills.

All children in this home are engaged in education. Older children attend college and participate in courses that are tailored to support their individual needs. The staff work closely with education providers to ensure that children are appropriately supported in line with their care plans. Children are helped to further develop their skills in the home. They take part in practical activities such as shopping, cooking and cleaning.

Children are supported to make progress. Four of the five children have lived in the home since the last inspection and their progress was evident. All five children were observed during the inspection. Notably, one child who previously spent most of the time in their bedroom was engaging positively with staff, playing outside and joining in with activities such as apple picking. This reflects the home's effective support in encouraging children's social engagement and overall development.

Although staff engage well with children, some staff's use of language, both written and verbal, is not consistently child-friendly or helpful for the children. This appears to come from a lack of understanding of how children's past experiences can influence their behaviours, rather than an unwillingness to meet their needs. This shortfall in practice has been identified by the managers and additional training around trauma-informed approaches has been agreed.

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

Children are helped to feel safe in this home. After any incidents they are reassured and supported to understand what has happened in the best way possible. The children actively seek out staff for reassurance, which reflects the trust and sense of security they feel in staff's presence. This nurturing approach helps to create a stable environment where children can grow and develop.

Children's behaviour support plans are regularly reviewed and adapted in response to changing risks. When children are struggling, additional staff support is put in place to

provide the necessary supervision. This ensures that children's safety and well-being is promoted.

Staff understand that physical intervention is only used as a last resort, and only for the safety of the child and others. After every incident, staff are given the opportunity to reflect on what happened and look at what could have been done differently. Children are helped to understand what happened. This reflective practice helps to support learning and reduces the risk of future incidents.

The children are helped to live together contently. While there have been two significant incidents between the children since the last inspection, on each occasion the children were helped to repair relationships and move on. This is done in a way that the children understand. This approach is helping the children to feel as safe as possible with one another.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home has a new management team, with both the manager and the deputy manager taking on these roles for the first time. They are well supported by an experienced operations manager, who provides guidance and oversight. The management team is currently leading a process of change and has successfully gained the support of the wider staff team. The staff team welcomes the changes and has a willingness to continue to improve the quality of care provided to the children.

Leaders and managers respond appropriately to allegations and complaints made by children. These instances are taken seriously and thoroughly investigated. This demonstrates the manager's commitment to safeguarding children and ensuring that concerns are addressed in a timely and effective manner.

The manager has established positive multi-agency relationships with other professionals. External professionals report that communication from the home is strong. The manager advocates for the children, ensuring that they receive the appropriate service to meet their individual needs. For example, he has worked proactively with specialist health workers to ensure that children's medication is regularly reviewed. This has resulted in one child no longer requiring medication.

The independent visitor regularly visits the home and spends time with the children and consults with other professionals. However, the reports do not consistently provide sufficient challenge or identify areas for improving the quality of care for children. Missing documents for the children are not being identified or addressed. This was a recommendation at the last inspection and no improvements have been made in this area. This lack of constructive feedback from an independent perspective, limits the manager's ability to make progressive changes in the home.

There are gaps in staff being equipped with the skills and knowledge in how to support children in understanding sexual health, relationships and puberty. As a result, children are not consistently provided with the necessary guidance to navigate their thoughts and

feelings around these important topics. Targeted training in this aspect of care would equip the staff with the knowledge and skills to better address the children's needs in a sensitive and informed way.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background; help each child to understand and manage the impact of any experience of abuse or neglect. (Regulation 6(1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(iv)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that the staff have the relevant skills and knowledge to support children who have experienced previous trauma, and how previous experiences can affect behaviours. Staff must also understand the importance of using child-friendly language both verbally and in written documents about the children.	20 November 2024
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether—	20 November 2024

children are effectively safeguarded; and

the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being.

The independent person's report may recommend actions that the registered person may take in relation to the home and timescales within which the registered person must consider whether or not to take those actions.
(Regulation 44 (1) (4)(a)(b) (5))

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff have the relevant skills and knowledge to be able to help children understand key areas of health and well-being such as, but not limited to, sexual relationships, growing up and puberty. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.18).

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: 1236450

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Caretech Community Services Limited

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

Responsible individual: Shelley Whiting

Registered manager: Jake Flood

Inspector

Jo Birtwhistle, Social Care Inspector

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