

1257101

Registered provider: The Drive Care Homes Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home provides care and accommodation for children with mild, moderate and severe learning disabilities with other associated complex needs.

The home also provides a short breaks service in addition to planned and emergency short- and long-term placements.

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: 18 to 19 May 2021

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: 4 December 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/12/2019	Full	Good
08/01/2019	Full	Good
06/02/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children make good progress in this home. Children have a variety of emotional and physical care needs when they move into the home. Staff offer stability and guidance to children. The care and support given by staff means that children are in education, are healthy and are making progress in their relationships with others.

Staff understand that children moving into the home require specific and individualised care. Managers ensure that staff have the skills and abilities to provide this care in a nurturing manner. The physical environment is well maintained, clean and reflects children's personalities. Consequently, children live in a home that feels safe and welcoming.

Children participate in their care and in the home. Children are encouraged by staff to make decisions about their food, activities and the décor of their rooms and the home. The children are supported to give their opinions during formal and non-formal times, such as during a house meeting or while on a walk or helping with cooking.

Staff understand the children in their care. A succinct pen picture is available for each child, as if written by that child, which describes their likes and dislikes. This tells staff how they should respond to particular behaviours and why these behaviours might occur. Relevant plans keep the child in the forefront of any interactions with staff and help staff to care for children in a consistent manner.

Children have clear plans and routines. Staff and children actively use a pictorial planner to know the routines for the week. Children respond well to the guidance and structure that this offers. Staff consistently promote positive behaviours which allows children to build trusting and secure relationships with staff.

Staff understand the importance of family connections. Staff ensure that they work with the family to support the progress of the children. Family members are encouraged to attend the home, to participate in community activities, and to observe staff to increase their understanding of their child. This offers a unified approach to children's care and development.

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

Staff communication about children can be inconsistent. Managers are not always ensuring that a robust message is given to staff about appropriate communication with children. Managers do not always evidence follow-up discussions or agreements with staff or professionals to ensure safeguarding measures are agreed. This could create confusion about how children are protected, although no children have come to any harm.

Staff know the children well. Staff can read children's verbal and physical gestures to ascertain the mood and well-being of each child. Children feel empowered by their routines after school and can vocalise when they are unhappy with potential changes. Children are noticed and understood in this home and any changes in behaviours are immediately identified by staff.

Risk management plans are clear and robust. Children are supported to undertake age-appropriate risks as part of the development of their independence skills. Staff carefully talk to children about any vulnerabilities to contextual safeguarding risks and then consider strategies to help them stay safe together. Plans are relevant, regularly reviewed and remain specific to the child. Consequently, children are helped and supported to manage themselves safely.

A child-centred approach is offered to children moving into the home. Senior staff visit the child in their home, school or hospital prior to agreements being made for them to move into the children's home. More than one visit can occur depending on the complexity of the child's needs. This ensures that children get to know staff and that staff have the right skills to meet children's needs.

A core team of staff provide ongoing care to children. Two agency staff are used consistently and are expected to participate in the training programme offered to permanent staff. The manager gives six-weekly supervision to the agency staff. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders agreed with the recruitment agency that any agency staff would only be contracted to this home. This meant that children were not unnecessarily exposed to the virus and were familiar with all the staff working in their home.

The staff team has developed good links with other professionals. This helps to support children's outcomes and improves their access to opportunities. Children's needs are considered holistically, and this enables them to live in the healthiest, happiest way possible.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There is a positive interaction between senior leaders and the manager of the home. The provider has organised the structure of the home, so that the manager can focus on the children. The manager uses tools such as a probation period, supervision sessions and yearly appraisals to provide direction, development and encouragement to staff. However, supervision notes are not always signed by both parties to endorse an agreed plan about how to practice within the home.

There is a process for management oversight. Staff are assigned key tasks and roles within the home, which allows for ease of accountability. The manager rotates the roles on a regular basis to develop staff expertise and to encourage an understanding of all aspects of caring for children. This ensures that children are offered care by a proficient staff team.

Senior leaders of the organisation have developed relationships with the children and have knowledge of children's behaviours and triggers. Consequently, they can contribute to professional network meetings. Children know senior leaders by name and are aware that they can make complaints or comments to them. This allows children to feel secure in their home and to know that all staff, including the senior managers, know how to respond to and advocate for them.

Staff are encouraged to remain in the organisation. There are clear development plans for staff, allowing them to acquire qualifications and to be promoted into higher positions. Staff spoken to were positive about the home and the organisation and they felt supported in their team. This ensures a strong, resilient and happy staff team to care for the children in the home.

Leaders and managers invest in their staff. New staff must complete required training courses prior to commencing their first shift and they also undertake a thorough induction process. More experienced staff are required to evidence their learning and training in practice. Bank and agency staff are used in this home; however, leaders have an objective to recruit eight permanent staff by the summer of 2021. This will provide further stability and consistency to the children.

Leaders and managers have responded to the requirement and recommendations from the previous inspection. Three recommendations have been made following this inspection.

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.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure they seek to involve the local authority and other relevant persons whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. This is in relation to maintaining written evidence of these discussions and/or agreements. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.4)
- The registered person should ensure they are responsible for ensuring that all staff consistently follow the home's policies and procedures for the benefit of the children in the home's care. This is in relation to ensuring effective and appropriate communication from all staff to children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.20)
- The registered person should ensure and be aware that it is good practice for a note of the content and/or outcomes of supervision sessions to be kept and to ensure that both the person giving the supervision and staff member have a copy of the record. This is in relation to ensuring the supervisor and supervisee have signed the supervision notes. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.4)

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: 1257101

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: The Drive Care Homes Ltd

Registered provider address: The Drive Care Homes Ltd, 18 Hatherley Road, Sidcup, Kent DA14 4BG

Responsible individual: Emmanuel Akpan

Registered manager: Abisola Sanni

Inspector

Tolulope Sawyerr, Social Care Inspector

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