

1257796

Registered provider: Cambian Childcare Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private company. It provides care for up to 12 children with ongoing mental health needs and who may not be able to live in the community without continued support. There is a separately registered school on site.

Inspectors only inspected the social care provision.

The manager registered with Ofsted in December 2018.

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 April 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	requires improvement to be 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: 16 January 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16/01/2024	Full	Good
13/12/2022	Full	Good
20/04/2021	Full	Good
31/07/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This inspection was brought forward to address specific concerns received by Ofsted. At the time of this inspection, ten children were living at the home.

The home has been through a recent period of unsettlement, with an increase of escalating incidents for some children related to their mental health. Despite this, leaders, managers and staff have ensured that good standards of individualised support and care have been maintained for children.

Leaders, managers and staff work diligently to enable children to gain the skills that they need to build their independence. Children are prepared both practically and emotionally through tailored plans and well-implemented support. This work has been instrumental in the recent successful move for one child to a foster family. There are plans for a further two children to move on to less supported environments due to the progress that they have made from their starting points.

Most children have good attendance at the onsite school. However, for some children this is variable. When attendance is low, staff work collaboratively with school staff to improve childrens engagement in line with their best interests and well-being. Most children do make measurable educational progress over time and benefit greatly from the bespoke support provided. This includes, for some children, working towards and sitting their GCSEs and, for others, taking advantage of meaningful work experience opportunities.

Children's views continue to be prioritised. Staff establish good relationships with children and encourage high levels of participation through house meetings and one-to-one discussions. All children have access to an independent advocate to assist them in sharing their wider views. When children do raise concerns, they are supported to make complaints, which are thoroughly responded to and actioned by leaders and managers. As a result, childrens rights are upheld, they feel listened to and they develop better reflection skills.

Children take part in a wide range of enriching activities and lead active lifestyles. Children have recently enjoyed a spa weekend, attended music concerts and have had opportunities for regular family-style outings at their favourite restaurants. Children attend exciting local clubs that match their interests including equestrian and dirt biking groups. Staff manage the balance between protecting children and supporting the breadth of children's experiences very well.

Staff provide high-quality support for children to explore their individual identities. Because of staff's support, children have been able to express their individuality and preferences in a safe space. Staff receive accredited training by a skilled member of staff in this area, which ensures that informed support is provided for children.

The home is decorated to a very good standard and is well-resourced throughout. Leaders and managers have recently obtained local funding to create a new sensory garden that will further meet children's preferences and needs.

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

Children have experienced previous trauma and have high levels of mental health needs. Many children become safer because of staff's support over time. However, there has been a recent difficult cycle of high-risk behaviours among children. During this time, staff have not always supported children safely and in line with their plans.

Staff, on two occasions, have not followed risk assessments in place to protect children. Leaders and managers took appropriate action, including seeking external oversight from the local authority designated officer and completing thorough investigations into staff practice. However, staff's failure to follow agreed strategies has placed highly vulnerable children at risk of significant harm.

In one instance, there was a delay in staff supporting a child to hospital when this was advised by medical professionals and other emergency services were not available. Records were not clear on another occasion how quickly medical attention was sought when a child was at risk of harm. This information is important as prompt responses from staff are crucial to safeguard children and reduce the risk of further harm. One delay and a lack of clarity provided in another record have reduced the effective monitoring, review and action taken by leaders and managers in relation to these two incidents.

Several restraints have been necessary. These have been used as a last resort to keep children and staff safe. Staff are appropriately trained. Leaders and managers ensure that children are given the opportunity to share their views following an incident. However, recently, staff debriefs have not always been undertaken within the required timescales. This could delay leaders' and managers' prompt identification of any learning from these incidents.

Children's risk management plans are detailed and regularly updated. They cover a range of risks and behaviours and include individual strategies that staff use to support the children. However, there are some inaccuracies in plans relating to staffing supervision levels and arrangements for one child when using their mobile phone. If unchecked, this shortfall could lead to inconsistencies in staff's practice.

Staff have responded to recent incidents of children going missing appropriately. Staff search for children and follow procedures to support children back to the home safely. There are several other occasions when staff have responded to other areas of risk for children safely and in accordance with their plans. Staff explore incidents and have detailed and reflective discussions with children to identify future coping strategies.

A consultant psychiatrist and an on-site psychology team work closely with the children and the staff. Individual therapy from specialists is provided. Staff regularly meet to monitor children's progress in therapy and to review their risks. Consequently, staff have a good understanding of children's behavioural needs and children are provided with well-planned support to improve their emotional resilience.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is suitably qualified and provides confident leadership in the care delivered at the home. She is dedicated, skilled and highly knowledgeable in relation to supporting children with ongoing mental health needs. A dedicated head of care and a group of general managers complement the leadership team, which is overseen by an experienced responsible individual.

Leaders and managers generally maintain effective oversight and operate well-developed managerial monitoring systems. However, the collective leadership team has needed to prioritise direct work with children throughout a recent turbulent period. This has meant that some uncharacteristic lapses in monitoring have occurred.

Leaders and managers ensure that there are enough staff on duty to meet agreed levels of supervision and the needs of children safely. Leaders and managers understand staffing trends. Any staffing turnover is addressed through effective staff recruitment drives.

Staff are positive about the support that they receive from leaders and managers. Regular and thorough supervision sessions provide staff with a supportive forum to reflect on their practice, review their professional development targets and discuss children's needs. Team meetings take place regularly and are well attended by staff.

Leaders and managers are strong advocates for children. They are tenacious in ensuring that any decisions made in respect of a child are well thought out and in children's best interests. This has included challenging other services, when necessary, in respect of ensuring children's welfare.

Leaders and managers give considered thought to which children stay at the home together. Comprehensive compatibility assessments are undertaken which are well-informed by the input of the leadership and clinical team.

Leaders and managers have addressed the previous requirements raised at the last inspection. The adaption of medication administration processes has resulted in less errors and stronger monitoring by staff. Leaders and managers have ensured that staff have attended bespoke substance misuse and report writing training. Further training courses in the 'Prevent' Duty and child criminal exploitation are planned for staff but have not yet taken place.

Leaders and managers have well-developed systems to address staff practice issues. However, on one occasion, a potential staff practice concern was not appropriately explored or addressed.

Parents and social workers provided positive feedback about the good progress that children make and the quality of children's overall experiences. However, some parents and social workers said that recent communication from staff has not been as good as it could be. There have been inaccuracies and delays in important information being shared with them. Additionally, leaders and managers were not aware of recent concerns raised by health professionals. Further work is needed by leaders and managers to adopt a shared understanding with these professionals about the support provided at the home.

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
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(1)(a)(iii)(vi)) In particular: staff must be consistently aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and follow the agreed risk assessment strategies to reduce risks to children; staff must ensure that medical attention is sought promptly for children when this is required. Staff records must clearly demonstrate when medical attention is obtained.	31 May 2024
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h))	31 May 2024

In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that any issues relating to staff's practice are identified and followed up with the staff member concerned.	
The registered person must ensure that— within 48 hours of the use of the measure [of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home] the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(b)(i))	31 May 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that risk assessments contain accurate information around staffing allocations and current risk-reduction measures for children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- The registered person should sustain effective working relationships with each child's placing authority and with other relevant persons. In particular, the registered person should ensure that good levels of communication with the wider network of support for children are consistently maintained. ('Guide to Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.3)
- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs. In particular, they should ensure that all staff attend training in the 'Prevent' duty and child criminal exploitation. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)

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: 1257796

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Cambian Childcare Limited

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

Responsible individual: Michael Coleman

Registered manager: Alex Mitchell

Inspectors

Mark Anderton, Social Care Inspector
Leanne Lyon, Social Care Inspector

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