

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 who may not be able to live in the community without continued support.

There is a separately registered school on site. The inspectors only inspected the social care provision.

The registered manager left the home in October 2024.

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 April 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be 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	inadequate
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 3 April 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: At a monitoring visit on 7 November 2024, Ofsted served a restriction of accommodation notice and compliance notices under the protection of children and the leadership and management of the home. On 16 December 2024, Ofsted identified that the restriction of accommodation notice had been adhered to and sufficient action to address the steps outlined in both compliance notices had been made. Therefore, the restriction of accommodation was lifted.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/04/2024	Full	Good
16/01/2024	Full	Good
13/12/2022	Full	Good
20/04/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

This inspection was brought forward to address concerns that have been sent to Ofsted in notifications. At the time of this inspection, there were seven children living at the home. Inspectors spoke to two children and spent time with others who preferred not to share their views.

Since the last monitoring inspection, three children have moved into the home. One of these children moved on from the home in an unplanned move after a short time. This was because staff could not meet their needs safely. The home has recently been through an extremely turbulent period with group dynamics that led to escalating incidents. This has led to instability and uncertainty for several children. Leaders and managers have failed to maintain effective oversight during this time. This has adversely affected children's experiences and reduced the quality of care provided. Despite this, some children have reduced their risks of self-harm and are responding well to the therapeutic support provided.

The decision to take new children with other children lacks logic and fails to assess the combined risks. Children expressed that they were concerned with how quickly other children were moving in. Three children moved into the home in quick succession over the course of three weeks. The depth and quality of the planning arrangements for one child were poor. Leaders and managers did not ensure all of the available information was assessed thoroughly. This fails to support the decision-making for the child to move to the home. Consequently, the group tensions increased. This led to children leaving the home together and experiencing harm. The staff could not respond safely and required police assistance on several occasions.

Children's attendance to the onsite school is very low. Most children have experienced gaps in their education before moving to the home. All children have education plans. However, there is limited support to improve children's sleep routines and low school attendance. It is not clear how staff are working with children to improve their confidence to re-engage in education. One staff member said that previous boundaries and incentives to support children's attendance have reduced.

Although children's progress and day-to-day experiences are variable, some children do make clear progress in their independence and life skills. There are plans for two children to move on to less supported environments due to the progress they have made.

Staff support children's health. Appropriate referrals are made for children to help with smoking cessation and substance misuse. Staff support and guide children in relation to their sexual health.

All children have access to an independent advocate to assist them in sharing their wider views and feelings. Children regularly participate in house meetings and one-to-one discussions with staff. Children are confident in sharing concerns with staff.

A consultant psychiatrist and on-site psychology team work with children and staff. Most children engage in weekly therapy sessions. One child has been able to benefit from therapy for the first time. Staff regularly meet with the clinical team to ensure there is a joined-up approach.

Staff offer children a range of activities that support their interests. Children have taken part in horse-riding sessions and trips to theme parks.

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

On one occasion, leaders and managers failed to follow the safeguarding procedures when concerns were raised about staff. There was a significant delay of 37 days in referring an allegation of harm involving staff members to the local authority designated officer (LADO). This meant protective safeguards were not considered and external oversight was not in place when it should have been. The child retracted their concerns. However, the long delay has reduced the reliability of the resulting enquiries and investigation.

There have been several other instances when leaders and managers have followed safeguarding procedures. When children have raised allegations of harm, LADO referrals have been made, and concerns have been appropriately investigated. Recent issues of poor staff practice have been identified and addressed promptly.

Leaders and managers ensure most children's risk management plans are appropriately reviewed and include individual strategies for staff to follow. However, when significant risks of self-harm for one child emerged, written guidance for staff to reduce this risk was not provided. This can limit staff's alertness to the risk and lead to inconsistencies in how staff safely respond to the child.

Frequent conflicts between children have occurred. Staff respond to conflicts between individual children. They document their concerns and explore children's feelings. However, reparative work between children is limited. There is a failure to address the direct impact children's actions have had on each other. As a result, children have not had always had adequate opportunities to resolve their differences.

Children have high levels of complex mental health needs. There has been a cycle of high-risk behaviours among children. This has led to necessary restraints and an increase in instances when children are missing from the home. Although, staff are intervening in line with agreed plans most of the time, they have been unable to de-escalate unsafe situations confidently and safely. Reliance on police intervention is common.

There are notable gaps in some of the staff's recording of incidents. These have reduced the assurances needed to verify staff's actions in response to risks and incidents of concern. These include incidents when staff have used restraint, responded to self-harm or when children are missing from the home. This shortfall is compounded by the acute vulnerability of children in these circumstances.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The home has not had a registered manager since October 2024. A new manager was appointed in January 2025. The manager has demonstrated a lack of knowledge in managing a large home for children with complex mental health needs. Following a management review the manager has left without registering with Ofsted. A new experienced manager has been appointed and is applying to register.

Despite an awareness of most of the shortfalls identified at this inspection and plans to address these, the seriousness of these failures has the potential to significantly undermine the safe care and support provided to children. Leaders and managers have not been effective in prioritising the improvements that are necessary.

Leaders and managers oversight and monitoring of the home are weak. There are several recommendations highlighted from the independent person's monthly monitoring visits which are not actioned within an appropriate time frame. This has led to some of the recommendations being restated and staff practice not improving. There are numerous delays in staff compiling full records in relation to the use of physical intervention and response to children going missing from the home. Several records are poor quality and unclear. This has meant that the extent of staff's support to de-escalate incidents in accordance with the model of support adopted at the home is unclear. Leaders and managers analysis and review of these incidents are either absent or poor. This has hindered the identification of any learning that is needed.

The on-call systems for staff who need direct assistance does not always work. At times, when several children have left the home together and been in unsafe situations staff have been unable to contact the home for some time to request urgent support to manage a crisis.

Leaders and managers have not ensured that court directed reports for one child have been shared with a social worker as required. Other social workers have reported that important information regarding recent incidents has not been shared within expected time frames. There is no suggestion that these issues have directly affected children's safety. However, not sharing information in line with agreements can impede on multi-agency responses designed to reduce the risk of harm to children.

Leaders and managers oversee a complaints procedure in response to children's complaints. However, one parent raised a recent concern. In this instance, there has been an unreasonable delay in leaders and managers handling and responding to this complaint in accordance with the complaint's procedure.

Generally, leaders and managers have ensured notifications are made to Ofsted when required. However, one allegation against a staff member was not notified without delay. This meant that Ofsted's ability to monitor safeguards on this occasion was reduced.

Professional feedback is mixed. Professionals have raised several concerns in relation to children's poor routines and staff's inability to manage the combined risks between children safely. One social worker was positive about a child's overall progress in managing their emotions and building their independence.

Despite the serious shortfalls identified at this inspection in relation to the leadership and management of the home. Staff said that generally they feel supported. Staff receive regular supervision and attend planned training. Further training has been identified by leaders and managers to support staff in improving their care of children.

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 (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; are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(vi)(vii)) In particular: leaders and managers must ensure that referrals are made without delay to the local authority designated officer when allegations of abuse are made against staff; leaders and managers must ensure that risk management plans are suitably reviewed when emerging risks for children are known.	30 May 2025
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.	30 May 2025

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home’s statement of purpose; ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(h)) In particular: leaders and managers must monitor and ensure that records in relation to the matters outlined in regulation 36 schedule 3 are completed by staff; leaders and managers must thoroughly review incidents of concern to ensure that any issues regarding the clarity of information provided or concerns about staff practice can be promptly identified and actioned; leaders and managers must ensure internal emergency on-call procedures for staff are effective; leaders and managers must ensure that the communication and sharing of information agreed with professionals, are adhered to.	
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b)) In particular, leaders and managers must implement a more effective system to understand the combined risks of children living together.	30 May 2025
The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation.	30 May 2025

(Regulation 39 (3))	
The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to achieve the child’s education and training targets, as recorded in the child’s relevant plans; understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers; help each child to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child’s relevant plans. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(x))	30 May 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that conflicts between children are fully addressed. Specifically, they should ensure children consistently have opportunities to resolve their differences. ('Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.16)
- The registered person should ensure that there is a system in place so that all allegations of abuse are notified to Ofsted, within 24 hours. ('Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.13)

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: 5th Floor, Metropolitan House, 3 Darkes Lane, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire EN6 1AG

Responsible individual: Michael Coleman

Registered manager: post vacant

Inspectors

Mark Anderton, Social Care Inspector
Mary Costello, Social Care Inspector
Deirdra Keating, Social Care Inspector

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