

1266838

Registered provider: Active Ark Limited

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A private provider owns and manages the home. It is registered to provide care for up to three children. At the time of the inspection, two children were living in the home.

The registered manager post has been vacant since December 2020. A manager was appointed in March 2021 and is in day-to-day charge of the home but is not applying to register. The provider is recruiting a manager.

Inspection date: 6 March 2023

Date of last inspection: 10 August 2022

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At these inspections, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

The care of children

Children have nurturing, warm relationships with the staff and manager. The children are appropriately matched and have settled into the routines and boundaries put in place by staff to manage their safety and behaviour.

Children's views are listened to by staff on a range of issues, including their own care planning. Plans detail how children want to be treated at times of crisis and what helps them. This ensures that children feel valued and included in the planning of their care.

The home is spacious and well maintained. There are toys, books and games in several of the communal rooms. Children's bedrooms are personalised, and children say that they have everything they need. Children have games consoles and mobile phones where appropriate. Staff monitor the use of these, and applications are used to ensure children's safety when online.

Education is seen as important and is supported by staff, who help with homework and transport children to and from school. When children have had difficulty with school placements, the staff have collaborated with external professionals and advocated on their behalf to ensure that alternative educational provision is found. Children are attending school and have incentives in place to support progress.

Staff have regular key-work discussions with children that show how staff are building relationships, implementing boundaries and routines, and promoting children's health. Debrief sessions and follow-up work on relevant topics also take place after any incident.

There have been only two incidents of children going missing from home since the last inspection. Staff reported these to the police while they continued to go out and look for the children. On both occasions, staff found the children and returned them safely. Discussions took place between children and staff to ensure that staff knew the reasons for the missing episode and could help to prevent further occurrence. The manager and staff have contacted local authorities to have an independent return-home interview but, at times, there has been no response. This means that children do not have the opportunity to speak to someone external to the home to discuss any worries that may have led to the missing episode.

The safety of children

Risk assessments and care plans outline children's vulnerabilities and risks. These are reviewed monthly, and show that the manager reviews these to ensure that they are effective. However, while incidents are also recorded clearly in other documents and are commented on by the manager for any learning for staff, incidents are not always included in the chronology of the risk assessment. This may mean that when staff assess the current risk, at the point of review, not all information is considered.

Children say that they feel safe in the home and that staff look after them well. There has been only one incident of the use of physical intervention to protect a child. This was well documented and reviewed by the manager for any learning. Discussions with children during the visit showed that children are also clear about the reasons why staff can intervene physically to protect them.

Online safety is taken seriously and strategies to guide staff are clear within plans and risk assessments.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

The home has been without a registered manager for a considerable amount of time. However, the manager who is currently in day-to-day charge has been in post for two years and knows the children well. He has addressed nine of the 10 requirements set at the last inspection, and now has systems in place to monitor the home and direct the staff to amend and improve practice.

Staff have supervision with the manager regularly, which includes discussions relating to the needs of the children, and gives staff the opportunity to reflect on practice. However, staff have not received any annual appraisals of their work to help with their own learning and development.

Mandatory training is up to date and bespoke training has been added to meet the specific needs of the children placed. However, one member of staff has not completed their required qualification within the timescales outlined in regulation.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/08/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
08/03/2022	Full	Good
11/12/2019	Interim	Improved effectiveness
30/07/2019	Full	Good

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 registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children's home if— there is no registered manager in respect of the home; and the registered provider— is an organisation or a partnership; does not satisfy regulation 28; or is not, or does not intend to be, in day-to-day charge of the home. If the registered provider appoints a person to manage the home, the registered provider must, without delay, give HMCI notice of— the name of the person so appointed; and the date on which the appointment takes effect. (Regulation 27 (1) (2))	31 May 2023
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that—	31 May 2023

the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform. For the purposes of paragraph (3) an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained— the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma. The relevant date is— in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home; or in the case of an individual who was working in a care role in a home on 1st April 2014, 1st April 2016. (Regulation 32 (1) (2) (3)(b) (4) (5))	
The registered person must ensure that all employees— have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(c))	31 May 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that when a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority provides an opportunity for the child to have an independent return-home interview. The fact that the visit takes place should be recorded or the matter escalated within the local authority. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)
- The registered person should ensure that all children's case records (regulation 36) must be kept up to date, including chronologies within risk assessments and care plans. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1266838

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Active Ark Limited

Registered provider address: Active Ark, Unit E, Baron Way, Kingmoor Business Park, Carlisle CA6 4SJ

Responsible individual: Louise Matthews

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Susan Atkinson-Millmoor, Regulatory Inspection Manager

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