

1269565

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is part of a specialist school providing residential care and a short-break service. The home can provide care for up to five children with autism, learning disabilities and associated social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in May 2023.

At the time of this inspection, three children were living at the home, with eight children using it for short breaks.

The inspector only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 October 2023

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	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 15 November 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/11/2022	Full	Good
23/08/2021	Full	Good
05/12/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
22/08/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children have positive experiences while living at or staying at this home. They enjoy a range of activities that are specific to their interests, including baking, colouring and going for walks in the park. One child loves public transport vehicles and is supported by staff to go on bus rides every day.

Children make progress from their individual starting points. They are supported to practise and develop their independence skills. Children are able to look after their own personal care, carry out basic chores and make sandwiches.

Staff respond appropriately to children's needs and praise them regularly. This supports children to develop positive relationships with staff.

Children are supported to spend time with their families. Staff support children to go on holidays with their families, spend time in their family home and enjoy quality time with them. Children's families are also welcome to spend time with their children at the home.

Children's health needs are well understood and are met. Staff prepare children well before their vital health appointments and support them to attend. This means that children feel calm and reassured during appointments.

Staff and managers understand children's communication needs very well. They use illustrated short stories that describe social situations to communicate with children and give them the opportunity to share their wishes and feelings. For example, when one child was moving back to their family home, a short story was created to help all children understand why the child was leaving, with pictures of their time spent at the home. The staff also held a leaving party for the child. This promoted a positive ending and helped the child to understand their life story.

Children are supported to engage in education and have made good progress. One child is supported by the home's staff in school. This has reduced significant incidents and challenging behaviours in the classroom and the child has engaged well in classroom activities.

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

Children who are new to the home are welcomed sensitively and with the best possible planning. The manager works closely with family members and social workers to assess children's needs and risks. Before their stay, children visit to familiarise themselves with the home and meet other children there. The manager and staff develop detailed risk management and support plans for children that address their needs and behaviours. These plans enable staff to help and protect children and ensure that they have good experiences during their stay at the home.

The manager and staff go above and beyond in their duty of care towards children and families. There have been occasions when families have called the manager and staff for help during crisis situations, and they have responded with care and support. Their actions ensure that children receive appropriate help and protection in emergency situations.

Staff only use physical intervention to prevent children from self-harming or from harming others. They know the children well and use strategies tailored to individual children to de-escalate risky situations. However, debriefs with children are not always held, or recorded, after the use of physical intervention.

Children who permanently stay in the home have had their bedrooms painted and decorated in their colour choices. However, the manager says that due to children's behavioural needs, the home suffers frequent damage and consequently is in need of various repairs. The manager added that he has little control of maintenance issues as the residential home is part of the wider school. Window handles and ventilators are broken and fire doors are damaged. Leaders and managers stated that fire doors are ready to be installed in October 2023. They acknowledge that the home looks unappealing and feels institutional.

After incidents, key-work sessions are carried out with children who communicate verbally. Staff respond with appropriate boundaries and speak to children about safe and acceptable behaviours. Positive relationships between staff and children allow key-work sessions to be meaningful and beneficial for children. This helps children to reflect on their actions and make better choices in the future.

Recruitment practice is not robust. Leaders and managers do not verify references, which potentially places children at risk. The local area risk assessments do not consider the views of other safeguarding agencies, to understand local area risk.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Leaders and managers know the children well and understand their needs and behaviours. They have high aspirations for children and work with families to support children's progress. They ensure that there is a sufficient level of staff to support children, based on their unique needs and risks. This ensures that children achieve good outcomes and have enjoyable experiences when they are at the home.

Leaders and managers deal with complaints appropriately and learn from them to improve children's experiences in the home. They use learning from complaints as opportunities to identify areas for improvement, and they have made positive changes in the service to ensure that children receive good care.

Parents and social workers feel confident in the care that children receive from staff in the home. They say managers and staff communicate well and work closely with them to support children's needs.

Leaders and managers do not review and monitor children's incidents and records of restraint effectively. One child's incident information was mistakenly recorded on another child's file. This prevents leaders and managers from having effective oversight of the care that children receive. It does not provide opportunities to understand the reasons for children's behaviours and how to prevent similar incidents in the future.

Staff do not receive regular and effective supervision. Consequently, managers do not have effective oversight of staff practice. Furthermore, team meetings do not take place regularly. Mandatory safeguarding training is out of timescales for some staff. These shortfalls compromise the manager's and staff's ability to reflect on and adapt their practice when necessary. Some staff also say they do not always feel supported or heard by leaders and managers.

The quality of care review and staff appraisals do not include feedback from children, staff and parents or carers. This does not allow leaders and managers to monitor the quality of care for children effectively, or to monitor staff practice. The pre-admission risk assessments do not take into account staff's skills when considering the suitability of a child moving into 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 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— ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(f)) In particular, leaders and managers must monitor and improve the quality of records. Leaders and managers must ensure that staff receive the appropriate support and training to provide a good quality of care to children and ensure that their needs are met well. In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that team meetings are held regularly and focus on staff development and child-related practice.	27 October 2023
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)(c))	27 October 2023

In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that all staff, including managers, receive regular and effective supervision and that their appraisals include feedback from children and staff.	
The registered person must ensure that— within 48 hours of the use of the measure, 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; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(b)(i)(ii)(c))	27 October 2023

Recommendation

- The registered person should only accept placements for children when they have fully considered the skills and training of staff and the impact that the placement will have for the child in the future and for other children in the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)

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: 1269565

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Responsible individual: Oyedele Salami

Registered manager: David Ibanez Montero

Inspector

Amena Begum, Social Care Inspector

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