

2538785

Registered provider: Action for Children

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is part of a national charity and commissioned by the local authority. It provides short breaks for up to 7 children who have learning and physical disabilities.

The manager has applied to register with Ofsted. She holds a level 5 diploma in leadership and management.

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 March 2026

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: 30 October 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/10/2024	Full	Good
05/02/2024	Full	Good
22/03/2023	Full	Good
20/07/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

At the time of the inspection, 4 children were having short breaks. All 4 children were seen and interacted with by the inspector.

Children look forward to their stays. Leaders and staff create a positive and engaging atmosphere that children enjoy. Parents and families demonstrate trust in staff's ability to provide good-quality care. One parent said, 'The proof is in the pudding – my child wakes up so excited. The home has so many levels of safeguards in place.'

Children are supported to take part in a range of enjoyable activities. Leaders and staff are creative in finding suitable trips that meet children's needs. For example, staff have taken children who use wheelchairs ice skating, providing opportunities they may not ordinarily experience. This promotes children's inclusion and supports them to feel part of the group.

Children are supported to work towards individualised targets. Each child has a target tracker which outlines their goals and how these will be achieved and records their progress. Children are encouraged to use their preferred communication styles to express their needs, and they make their beds and use cutlery at mealtimes. Staff's consistent use of the trackers contributes to children making good progress in these areas.

Staff identify children and families with additional vulnerabilities. Leaders have applied for additional funding to support families who require essential items. One child was supported to go clothes shopping, ensuring they had appropriate clothing and helping to improve their comfort and confidence.

The environment is child focused and suitable. Games and sensory toys are available for children during their stays. However, some areas of the home require attention to provide a fresher and more welcoming feel. Several walls need repainting and some bathroom sink plugholes show signs of rust. Outdoor play equipment is available, but there is no accessible equipment for children who use wheelchairs.

It is not clear how children's views and wishes are monitored over time. Although leaders and staff obtain children's feedback about activities, using their individual communication methods, this is not consistently recorded. As a result, it is not always evident how children's requests have been followed up.

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

Missing-from-care incidents are rare in the short-breaks service. On the one occasion that a child went missing, the manager and staff responded promptly and effectively. As a result, the child was located shortly afterwards. Staff consulted appropriately with

relevant professionals and the child's family. The manager carried out an internal investigation which clearly identified learning points from the incident.

Medication errors are infrequent but have occurred on 2 occasions. Children were not harmed. Staff reported errors when identified, and leaders facilitated reflective discussions to identify learning and reduce the risk of future mistakes.

Physical interventions are proportionate and used safely. Staff rely on the positive relationships they have built with children to prevent escalation. Consequently, incidents are de-escalated quickly, and interventions are used for the shortest possible time. Children and staff have opportunities to reflect following incidents, allowing the manager to maintain oversight and be assured that practice is appropriate.

Children's risks are well understood by leaders and staff. Leaders ensure that risk assessments are regularly updated and contain detailed, relevant information. This provides clear guidance for staff and enables them to respond confidently to children's needs.

Staff respond well to safeguarding concerns. When a staff member identified an unexplained bruise on a child, this was immediately reported to the manager. This prompt response enabled the manager to notify relevant professionals and family members and conduct a robust investigation. Although the cause of the bruise could not be confirmed, the manager identified learning for the staff team to minimise the likelihood of further unexplained marks.

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

The manager's monitoring systems are not sufficiently clear or robust. There is no specific system to support oversight of the home. As a result, it is not evident how the manager assures herself that all documents are up to date and that plans are current.

The manager's recent review of the home was not fully effective. The most recent review of the quality of care report did not sufficiently evaluate the development of the short-breaks service, and it included limited information about planned actions for the next 6 months. It is not clear how the manager intends to drive continued improvement.

Not all staff are suitably qualified. One staff member has not completed the required qualification within the required timescale, although leaders are supporting them to do so.

The service is led by a manager and two team leaders. Leaders show care for children and staff and demonstrate commitment to the short-breaks service.

Staff feel well supported by leaders. Permanent and agency staff receive regular supervision, and sessions include reflection on practice and staff wellbeing. This helps staff feel confident to raise concerns or seek support.

Staff are suitably trained for their roles. Leaders provide a range of bespoke training, including international dysphagia diet standardisation initiative (IDDSI) and diabetes training. The manager maintains clear records of training completed by agency staff. This ensures that all staff working in the home have appropriate knowledge to support children effectively.

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 have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(h)) This relates to the manager's monitoring systems being robust, so that children's files are up to date with all necessary information.	16 April 2026
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—	16 April 2026

full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(d))	
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality-of-care review") at least once every 6 months. In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(c))	16 April 2026

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the home is a nurturing and supportive environment that meet the needs of all the children. Specifically, that the home is maintained to a high standard. Wallpaper should be repaired, damaged curtains replaced and there should be outside play equipment suitable for children who are wheelchair users. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: 2538785

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Action for Children

Registered provider address: Action for Children, 3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road, Watford WD18 8AG

Responsible individual: Vanessa Cole

Registered manager: N/A

Inspector

Chanel Bryant, Social Care Inspector

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