

2563530

Registered provider: London Borough of Waltham Forest

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and operated by a local authority. It provides short breaks or long-term care for up to nine children who have physical and/or learning disabilities. The home was registered with Ofsted in January 2020.

Recently, leaders have successfully applied to Ofsted to vary the home's condition of registration. This has increased the number of children living in the home long term from three children to four.

Following the recent resignation of the previous post holder, the home's new manager has applied to be registered with Ofsted.

At the time of the inspection, four children were living at the home, and three children were attending for a short break experience. Several children were observed taking part in leisure activities.

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 November 2025

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	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 12 March 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/03/2025	Full	Good
06/02/2024	Full	Good
22/02/2023	Full	Good
03/11/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children receive good-quality care from a skilled and committed staff team; they feel secure and have a sense of belonging. Children's care is tailored to meet their often complex needs, and as a result, they make good progress. A parent said of the short break service, 'My child is always looking forward to going, and he enjoys his time there. The staff keep him engaged and interested by providing fun and educational activities.'

Children enjoy trusted and positive relationships with staff, who are enthusiastic and passionate about their care of children. Children enjoy spending time with staff and are relaxed in their presence. A staff member said, 'The best thing about my job? The kids! I like engaging with them, helping them to be independent, ready for the outside world. That's what makes me feel proud.'

Children make good progress from their starting points. Staff devise care plans for children living at the home that establish individual goals and targets for them to achieve. However, support plans for children attending for a short break experience are less effective. These plans do not consistently identify children's targets or timescales in order to review the progress children are making. As a result, the focus and aim of children's short break experiences is not always clear.

Children's identity needs are well met. Children prefer not to attend places of worship, but some enjoy watching religious programmes on television. Staff ensure that children who are Muslim are served Halal meals; some children have flags up in their bedrooms that reflect their cultural heritage. Children have regular time with family and friends if it is appropriate and safe for them to do so. The organisation has developed a digital app for children to store photographs and videos that they can access at any time, and especially when they move on from the home. This helps children to retain an accessible record of their experiences.

Children have healthy lifestyles. They benefit from the staff team's skill in meeting children's often complex healthcare and emotional needs. Children living at the home largely do not communicate through speech. Staff have a good understanding of the different ways that children express themselves and they are creative in ensuring that they understand children's wishes and feelings. This actively enables children to make choices.

Children's learning outcomes are good, as all children enjoy and attend school regularly. Staff work in partnership with school staff and attend key school meetings to help promote children's achievements. Staff support children to become as independent as possible. As a result, children make good progress in their communication and social skills, in managing personal care tasks and in assisting with everyday household tasks.

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

Children are protected from harm, abuse, neglect, bullying and self-harm. Staff complete safeguarding training that has a focus on providing safe care to disabled children, and staff know and understand safeguarding policies and procedures well.

Staff's care practice has a strong focus on keeping children safe; their vigilance and supervision of children is effective. As a result, very few safeguarding incidents occur. Where there are safeguarding concerns, managers complete thorough and comprehensive investigations. Since the last inspection, there has been one allegation made about two members of staff. This investigation is ongoing, and managers are working closely with safeguarding professionals.

Children benefit from staff's understanding of the impact disability may have on children's behaviour. Some children initially present with challenging behaviour, but this behaviour reduces the longer children live at the home. Staff manage children's behaviour sensitively and promote positive behaviour. Behaviour management plans are comprehensive and address the specific needs of children. This means that restraint is rarely used. When it is, records are clear and explain why and how staff safely restrain children to ensure the safety of the child and others.

Staff know when children are in discomfort or are unhappy due to their knowledge of children's communication methods and their usual presentation. For example, staff support children to use a pictorial mood board on display for children to indicate how they are feeling. While the children's guide outlines how complaints are made, this is largely available in the written word and so most children are unable to access important information. This was highlighted as a shortfall at the last inspection.

Staff complete detailed risk assessments that provide them with strategies to help reduce risks posed to children. Typically, these focus on risks that result from children not understanding potentially dangerous situations, for example road awareness. Safety plans focus on things that children can do to help keep themselves safe and staff help children to understand the risks that they may face through key-work sessions. This supports their development and independence.

Communication between staff and safeguarding professionals is regular. Staff and managers share any emerging concerns with children's professional networks, including through attending professional and strategy meetings that explore risks to children and safety planning.

The physical environment is safe and secure and meets the needs of disabled children. Specialist adapted equipment, such as hoists, adapted bathing equipment and beds, add to children's safety. There are effective fire precautions in place, and since the last inspection, all children have personal emergency evacuation plans.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The management and leadership of the home is effective. Since the last inspection, a new manager has been appointed. They are a qualified social worker with extensive experience of working in children's residential care. Senior managers are invested in the home's continual improvement. They have a weekly presence at the home and enjoy meeting with children and the staff team to gain ideas about developing the home's services. While there are some opportunities for parents to meet individually with leaders, there are limited opportunities for parents to meet collectively to share their views about the home. This is a missed opportunity for parents to have influence in shaping improvements to the home and its continued development.

Leaders and managers' oversight is good, and they are responsive and ambitious for children's development, progress and safety. For example, senior managers have successfully applied to Ofsted to vary the home's registration conditions to accommodate an additional child following a crisis in the child's family circumstances. Leaders quickly converted a former staff bedroom into a child's bedroom in order to safely meet the child's care needs. The child settled in quickly and professionals report that he is making very good progress.

The home is managed in line with its statement of purpose, and managers ensure that the care planning process is effective. Care plans are appropriate for children new to the home and for those already living there. Staff are careful in their grouping of children for short breaks in order to encourage friendships.

Managers provide good support to the staff team. Most staff have been working at the home for several years. A staff member said, 'All the managers are lovely. The new manager is very experienced, open and supportive. He's direct, yet supportive.' The induction process for new staff is effective, and appraisals take place each year. Staff receive regular, meaningful supervision, which ensures that the support available to them meets their developmental needs to work effectively with children.

Staff have access to good training opportunities. However, managers' records of staff training are inaccurate. This means that it is difficult to determine which training staff have completed or needs updating.

Managers regularly review children's files, which has supported the quality of most records to improve. However, support plans for children attending for short breaks are vague and do not establish goals and targets for children to work towards. In addition, some files do not confirm that staff are holding regular key-work sessions with children.

Professionals' and parents' feedback about the experiences and progress children make is positive and confirms that children receive good, safe quality care that meets their needs. An independent reviewing officer reported to a child, 'I was pleased to hear that you are happy in your new home... I'm very pleased with the progress you are making.'

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— 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)) In particular, the manager must use their monitoring to ensure that records of key-work sessions and short breaks support plans are of a consistent high quality. The manager must also ensure that there is a consistent record of training to support their oversight of staff skills.	31 December 2025
The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who— keep the children's guide and the home's complaints procedure under review and seek children's comments before revising either document. (Regulation 7 (1)(2)(c)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that the children's guide is available in formats that are accessible to children. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	31 December 2025

The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)) In particular, the manager must ensure that staff complete all training the provider deems mandatory.	31 December 2025
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure the welfare of children in their care through engagement with each child's family/carers. This relates to increasing the engagement with parents and carers to help shape and develop services provided by the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.23)

Information about this inspection

The inspector has 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: 2563530

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Sycamore House, Forest Road, Walthamstow E17 4JF

Responsible individual: Abigail Adieze

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Sandra Jacobs-Walls, Social Care Inspector

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