

2590824

Registered provider: Action for Children

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This six-bed home provides short breaks for children with learning and physical disabilities and sensory impairment.

At the time of this inspection, two children were staying at the service. Both children were non-verbal.

The home registered with Ofsted in August 2020.

The registered manager's post has been vacant since June 2022.

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 February 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	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 7 July 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/07/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff are proactive in gathering key information from children's parents, social workers, and other professionals so that they stay well informed about children's changing needs between stays.

Children's short-break plans are written in the first person, which brings the child's voice to life.

Children make good progress in developing their life skills. For example, some children have developed their social skills and are now able to engage positively with other children. Through tailored support, some children have developed essential life skills, such as being able to eat independently.

Staff regularly obtain children's wishes and feelings and act on them. Staff familiarise themselves with children's technology, such as communication pads. They use a range of communication methods, such as Makaton and picture symbols, to consult with children and offer them choice. For example, staff are currently consulting children about their preferred colours for a new sofa.

Managers and staff work hard to ensure that the environment is as child friendly and homely as possible.

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

Staff understand children's vulnerabilities. Staff write children's safety plans in consultation with children's teachers and parents. This collaborative working has helped to reduce the occurrence of incidents.

Staff are alert to the smallest of changes in children's behaviours and recognise them as a form of communication that something is wrong. Staff quickly respond with known calming methods and diversion.

Leaders and staff work hard to match children with similar needs and interests. Children are helped to build positive relationships with each other, and staff express joy when they see these relationships blossom.

Due to children's varied levels of vulnerabilities, staff use a key-fob system for certain internal doors, such as the kitchen. Staff are clear that these measures are only used to ensure that children stay safe and are appropriately supervised. Consequently, children routinely go into the kitchen with staff to participate in baking and cooking.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has been in post since June 2022 and is in the process of applying to Ofsted to be the registered manager.

Leaders and managers are suitably experienced and qualified. Leaders and managers have clear ambitions to make the service the best it can be for children. Leaders and managers look for opportunities to gain experience from others to improve practice or embrace useful models of working. For example, the manager has been given the go ahead by senior leaders to explore the use of the model 'Playfulness, acceptance, curiosity, and empathy' in the setting.

Staff feel supported and listened to. A strength of the staff team is its diversity, which reflects many of the families using the service. This helps in communicating with families and developing trusting relationships.

Staff receive suitable training and guidance to carry out their role. Specialist support is available from teachers, community nurses, and the children and adolescent mental health services. This strong partnership helps to ensure that children receive high-quality care from a skilled and knowledgeable staff team. However, leaders and managers have not created an informed workforce plan to capture the staff's skills and knowledge.

Leaders and managers have worked hard to develop informative records that help to show children's level of progress as a result of their short stays. However, in one case, an agreed reporting procedure to show how a child was meeting their targets had not been followed. The manager was alerted to this shortfall during the inspection, which resulted in immediate action being taken.

Despite managers and staff trying to obtain essential documents from children's placing local authorities, such as copies of up-to-date child in need plans and education, health and care plans, these are often not received. To bridge this shortfall, managers and staff prioritise attending care planning meetings to ensure that they stay aware of any changes in a child's needs. However, managers and staff do not always consider escalating these delays with the placing local authorities.

Leaders and managers make sure that the statement of purpose is kept under review and updated when necessary. However, when revisions occur, the revised version is not always sent to Ofsted in line with regulation.

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, 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 registered person must ensure that all staff follow the agreed process for monitoring children's progress and there is effective management oversight of this.	1 May 2023
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. The registered person must— notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (1) (3)(b))	1 May 2023
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (c))	1 May 2023

In particular, the registered person must ensure that when requests for essential children's documents, such as child in need or education, health and care plans, are not made available, this is escalated to the relevant person in the responsible authority.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that a workforce development plan is in place that outlines how staff and managers will be supported to meet the objectives in the statement of purpose. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 53 paragraph 10.8)

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: 2590824

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: Kate Isham

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Colin Bent, Social Care Inspector

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