

2590824

Registered provider: Action for Children

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is run by a charitable organisation on behalf of the local authority.

The home provides short-break accommodation for up to six children who have complex special educational needs and/or disabilities and physical disabilities.

There are currently 22 children accessing the service on a rotational basis.

During this inspection, three children stayed at the home on different nights.

The home registered with Ofsted in August 2020.

The registered manager post has been vacant since 30 October 2023. A new manager has been appointed and is completing the application to register with Ofsted.

The inspector was aware during this inspection that serious child protection allegations were being investigated by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate allegations of this kind, actions taken by the home in response to the allegations were considered, where appropriate, alongside other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform the inspector's judgements.

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 February 2024

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: 21 February 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/02/2023	Full	Good
07/07/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

There are currently 22 children accessing the service on a rotational basis. Children's visits are well planned. Children mostly stay with the same group of children, and this supports the friendships they have made. Detailed planning ensures that children enjoy each other's company. Parents say that children like coming to the home, and some see it as a 'holiday', where they can socialise and meet their friends in a safe space.

Many children who attend for short breaks are nonverbal. Staff understand children's communication styles and support them to use different communication methods, including the Picture Exchange Communication System. Each child has a detailed communication passport. As a result, staff can respond dynamically to children's wishes and feelings.

Children enjoy a range of activities that are specific to their interests and talents. They benefit from having good routines and structure when they visit the home. Children are supported to choose their activities when they visit, including community activities such as the cinema, local parks and arcades. The home has a range of indoor games and a large garden where children can play. This gives children opportunities to have new experiences in the home with other children.

The staff and managers ensure that children's health needs are met well when they visit. Some of the children have complex medical conditions that require daily medication. Health records are clear and staff know about children's allergies and individual health plans. Managers have clear systems for training in the administration of medication, and staff show appropriate understanding. Medication errors are very rare. When staff make errors, these are quickly identified and staff seek medical support and monitor children as needed. Managers help staff learn from these incidents; however, the two medication errors recorded do not demonstrate this well.

The home's physical environment is warm and comfortable for children. All children's bedrooms are themed, adapted and decorated to meet their needs. The home is homely, spacious and maintained to a high standard. Children are comfortable and move freely in the home.

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

Children benefit from high staffing levels, and there are clear behaviour support plans to support their needs. Staff support children to understand boundaries and routines. Staff have a good understanding of children's needs and know how to support children if they are upset. Staff can identify whether children are happy or sad by the sounds or gestures that they make. This means that even children with the most significant needs have positive experiences when they visit.

Children are safeguarded effectively. Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding procedures. They work well with parents and external professionals. The stable and consistent home environment, together with the warmth and confidence of the staff, makes the children feel safe and secure.

There have been three incidents of physical restraint since the last inspection. Staff only use physical restraint when it is necessary to safeguard children and others. Children receive appropriate support following incidents of restraint to enable them to reflect on their emotions. Managers promptly review incidents and speak with staff. The manager has identified that records need to provide more details and has addressed this in team meetings, arranging refresher training for the staff.

Staff understand and manage children's risks well. However, one child's risk assessments do not include information about all known risks and the strategies in place to manage these. In addition, some risk assessments were due to be updated at the time of this inspection.

Safeguarding practice is strong. Staff have a good understanding of whistle-blowing procedures. Leaders and managers take allegations of harm seriously and act promptly when issues arise. This increases children's safety in the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager post has been vacant since October 2023. Leaders were prompt in recruiting a new manager, who is in the process of applying to register with Ofsted. The responsible individual is present and readily available to support the new manager and the team. The manager and staff know the children well and hold high aspirations for them. Feedback from professionals and parents about the leaders and staff is very positive.

Staff say that they feel well supported by leaders and managers. They have access to regular supervision, and managers are available for advice or guidance. New staff have access to a good induction process that helps them settle into their work. All staff have access to training, as well as having joint discussions about children in team meetings. This all adds to staff feeling able to provide nurturing, supportive care that helps children to settle and enjoy their stay.

Staff understand their roles and responsibilities. They contribute to the successful running of the home and feel valued and respected. They have regular supervision sessions and attend monthly staff meetings. This supports them to work consistently with each other and to provide good-quality care for children.

Leaders and managers have an effective procedure for resolving complaints informally as well as through the formal complaints procedure. They address any concerns and complaints efficiently and honestly. They view complaints in a positive light, as opportunities to review, reflect on and improve the service that they offer.

However, one complaint record did not show the details of actions taken to address the concerns raised by one parent.

Leaders and managers know the strengths and weaknesses of the home. For example, managers have reviewed the 'body map' recording and reporting system, in which staff record and describe any mark on a child's body, no matter how slight. They work well with children's parents and professional networks. Three requirements raised at the last inspection have been met.

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
A person may only manage a children's home if— the person is of integrity and good character; having regard to the size of the home, its statement of purpose, and the number and needs (including any needs arising from any disability) of the children— the person has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills to manage the home effectively and lead the care of children; and the person is physically and mentally fit to manage the home; and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the person in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. For the purposes of paragraph (1)(b)(i), a person has the appropriate experience and qualification if the person has— within the last 5 years, worked for at least 2 years in a position relevant to the residential care of children; worked for at least one year in a role requiring the supervision and management of staff working in a care role; and by the relevant date, attained— the Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 5 Diploma"); or a qualification which the registered provider considers to be equivalent to the Level 5 Diploma. (Regulation 28 (1)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(c) (2)(a)(b)(c)(i)(ii))	2 April 2024

In particular, the new manager must submit a complete application to register with Ofsted.	
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child’s relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child’s welfare. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vi)) In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that children’s risk assessments include information about all known risks and are updated following new information or significant incidents; they must ensure that any incidents of medication errors are recorded and monitored appropriately.	2 April 2024
Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must establish a procedure for considering complaints made by or on behalf of children. The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. (Regulation 39 (1) (3)) In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that complaints received from parents about their children have a clear recorded response and actions taken.	2 April 2024

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that records of restraint are detailed and have clear information to enable effective scrutiny of staff practice. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)

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: Emily Evans

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Dorothy Thompstone, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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