

2594218

Registered provider: Gordon Care Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned home cares for up to four children with learning disabilities and/or social and emotional difficulties.

This home was registered with Ofsted in September 2020. The registered manager post has been vacant since August 2022. The home's deputy manager is currently managing the home.

At the time of the inspection, three children were living at the home; another child was having a short-break experience. Three children were observed and spoken with during the inspection. The inspector also met with a parent who was visiting the home during the inspection.

Inspection dates: 30 and 31 May 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account good

How well children and young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers requires improvement to be good

Date of last inspection: 22 November 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/11/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
11/10/2022	Full	Inadequate
28/07/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children receive individualised care that meets their needs well. Many of the children do not communicate through speech. Therefore, staff work hard to interpret and understand their needs and offer them person-centred care. This helps children to achieve their targets, make progress and have fun experiences.

Children develop strong and trusting relationships with staff. This is important, as most of the children are non-verbal and are reliant on staff knowing and understanding their needs. Children engage well with the staff and clearly enjoy spending time with them. Staff are attentive and skilled in communicating with children. They regularly use social stories to help children understand what is happening. The home's feelings board helps children to indicate how they are feeling.

Children are supported to live healthily. Children's healthcare needs are well understood by staff, who manage children's healthcare and treatment plans safely. Staff receive training in relevant healthcare issues, for example first-aid and medication training. Children have access to primary and specialist healthcare services. This includes nutritionists and speech and language specialists. Staff's communication with healthcare professionals is frequent. This ensures that children's healthcare needs are well met. Staff manage children's medication safely.

Children's learning outcomes are very good. Staff are keen advocates for children and ensure that their learning needs are met. Staff work diligently with school personnel to help them to understand children's abilities and to tailor their learning accordingly. This encourages children to meet their full potential. For one child, staff remain with them in school for the entire school day. This supports teachers to manage the child's behaviour and promote their learning.

Staff find innovative ways to offer children choices. They make a concerted effort to use symbols and pictures to help obtain children's views, particularly where children do not use speech to communicate. Staff encourage children's use of Makaton and the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) to express themselves. Staff also encourage, understand and make use of signs and gestures that children make up for themselves. This ensures that staff have a good understanding of children's wishes and views, which helps to shape the care that children receive.

Children benefit from staff's belief and commitment that they should not be denied opportunities and enjoyable experiences that their peers enjoy. As a result, staff ensure that they provide children with a good range of social, educational and leisure opportunities. Children enjoy going into their local community, having days out to the farm, the seaside and recently, a holiday to Butlins. While at home, children very much enjoy safe play or quiet time in the home's sensory room. They

often use the jacuzzi hot tub which is in the garden. One child who particularly enjoys water play has a hydro bath fitted in his bathroom.

Staff ensure that there are safe arrangements in place for children to see their family regularly. Families are welcome to visit children at the home; staff also accompany some children to visit their families at the family home. This is regardless of the distance. One child travels a considerable distance to visit his family home with staff once a month and the staff member stays with the child throughout.

Children receive person-centred care. Staff understand and adhere to children's individual care plans. Staff work with children to meet their identified needs. For some children, this includes promoting their independence; for others, work is focused on developing their speech. Some children are now able to speak words, while others are able to complete daily household tasks independently. Children make significant improvement in their development the longer they remain living at the home.

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

Staff work hard to keep children safe. They provide one-to-one supervision to all children. This ratio of staff increases when activities take place away from the home. The home has good safeguarding policies and procedures and staff receive training in child protection. However, some staff do not demonstrate a good understanding of the action to take if an allegation is made against a senior member of staff.

Children do not go missing from the home or experience exploitation, abuse or bullying. Staff's supervision of children is effective and there are fewer critical incidents than previously. Staff only restrain children when harm is posed to them or others. Records of restraints are detailed, but this information is recorded on a number of different documents and is not centrally recorded. This makes it difficult to understand fully the incident and potentially compromises management oversight.

Complaints against the home are rare. Since the last inspection, there has been one complaint reported to staff. Managers resolved this complaint appropriately. Ofsted also recently received a complaint about the home. During the inspection, the inspector viewed information relevant to the issues raised. This information did not highlight any concerns.

Staff work effectively with other safeguarding professionals to ensure that children are kept safe. Children's risk assessments highlight known and anticipated risks posed to them. Management strategies are tailored towards the specific needs and circumstances of individual children. Recommended strategies are effective and help to keep children safe.

Staff encourage children to adhere to structure and boundaries. Staff management of challenging behaviour is measured and appropriate. They devise positive behaviour management plans that take into consideration the impact of children's

disabilities. Behaviour management strategies are effective in helping children to regulate their emotions and promote their positive behaviour.

Managers conduct staff recruitment in line with safe recruitment policies. This confirms that staff are suitable to work with vulnerable children. Parents report that they feel at ease with the staff and feel that they provide safe care to their children. One parent told the inspector: 'The home is brilliant. The staff are informative and take good care of [child's name]. He's safe here, well protected, and I'm a fussy mum.'

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

The leadership and management of the home are strong. However, the judgement for this outcome area has been influenced by the provider's inability to promptly appoint a suitable individual to manage the home. In addition, the home's current deputy, who is in day-to-day charge of the home, is yet to be registered with Ofsted as required.

The home is meeting the aims and objectives in its statement of purpose. All of the shortfalls identified at the home's last inspection have been successfully resolved. Children receive information about the home in formats that they are familiar with and they can easily access this information.

The home's monitoring systems are robust. The provider has very recently appointed an operations manager to help support the home's deputy manager. Managers undertake regular monitoring exercises. These explore most aspects of the home's functioning and offer some insight into the quality of the service. However, some records, such as placement planning and restraint information, are not streamlined and so accessing information is difficult. Some areas of the home show signs of wear and tear and require redecoration.

Leaders and managers have an ambitious vision for the development of the home and have high aspirations for children's achievements. The home's development plans highlight how managers intend to strengthen the quality of care that staff provide to children.

Managers provide very good support to the staff team. A member of staff said: 'I'm well supported. Managers are happy to help and offer advice. We have their numbers to contact at any time. There's weekly staff meetings and monthly supervision. Managers are interested in children and are interested in staff too.'

The induction of new staff is effective and includes opportunities to shadow experienced staff. Team members receive regular, meaningful supervision that meets their development needs. Staff training, mentoring and coaching opportunities are excellent.

Managers and staff share effective working relationships with other professionals. Communication between staff and external professionals is regular and effective. Local authority social workers have direct access to children's information as recorded on the home's recording system. This means that in addition to staff providing monthly progress summaries, and attending statutory meetings, social workers have access to updated information about children. This ensures that all parties are aware of placement developments, and of any concerns for children.

A child's guardian said: 'I am the children's guardian for one of the young people and I have been impressed by the progress he has been made. I visited him in February 2023. He has made good progress, such as coping with going out more, not being so anxious and communicating better. I observed staff being caring and patient with him. The local authority is now supporting the young person staying there.'

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 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— understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(v)) This relates to staff's understanding of policies and procedures with regard to allegations against senior members of staff.	1 July 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. This relates to staff streamlining restraint and placement planning information centrally so that all related information is contained in one document. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person should ensure that the children's home provides a nurturing, supportive and homely environment that meets the needs of the children. This relates to some communal areas of the home that show signs of wear and tear and require redecoration. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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: 2594218

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Gordon Care Services Limited

Registered provider address: 7 St Albans Grove, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 1ND

Responsible individual: Sylvia Gordon

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Sandra Jacobs-Walls, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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