

2632726

Registered provider: Ashdown Care Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a private provider. It provides care for up to three children with learning disabilities, sensory impairment or drug and alcohol dependence.

The manager registered with Ofsted in December 2023.

There was one child living at the home at the time of this inspection. The inspector spoke with them during the inspection.

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 May 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	outstanding
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 5 June 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/06/2024	Full	Good
23/01/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
17/10/2022	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

When children come to live at the home, they stay for a long time. This enables children to develop deep meaningful relationships. One child who has only lived in the home for a few months has already created close relationships with staff. The child has experienced consistent care and stability, helping them to make good progress from their starting point.

Staff advocate on behalf of children, making sure professionals know what their opinions are. For example, one child said they did not wish to talk about their family or see them. Staff have taken the time to understand why the child feels like this. The child's views are being respected, but staff continue to have conversations with the child in case their views change.

Staff understand the children's preferred communication methods. One child can communicate with words well but likes to see information written down. This helps them process the information being shared. For example, they have created their own grid on a whiteboard in the office, detailing which staff are in the home and when. This reassures the child about who will be in the home throughout the day. A previous child used information through pictures and symbols to support their routine.

Staff make sure children go to school and make progress irrespective of their individual learning needs. One child has gone back to college after being out of education for a long time. They now go to college every day. Staff have been active in supporting this child in college to help with their transition.

Encouragement is given to children to try new things. This is to find new opportunities and activities to widen their experiences in the world. For some children, this can cause them anxiety. Staff use their relationships to reassure children when they find new situations difficult. This is working well, and children have been able to go to new places and do new things, for example being a football coach for younger children. This has helped the child realise what they want to do in the future.

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

Staff encourage positive behaviour in the home and appropriately challenge unwanted conduct. Staff will use humour or give children space when the children struggle with emotions. Staff appropriately intervene to keep children safe if a child is at risk of hurting themselves. Effective oversight from the management team supports staff to learn from incidents and keep the children's plans under review.

Children have incentives to encourage good choices and behaviour. This helped one child reduce their use of vapes over a few months.

Missing-from-home incidents are a rare occurrence. When incidents do occur, staff take immediate action to find the child. When necessary, they contact the police. This helps them to return children to the home in a timely and safe way. Staff talk to children afterwards to see if there is anything they can help with.

The manager takes complaints from children seriously. The manager speaks to the children and staff. When needed, she will also speak to social workers and escalate concerns to the local authority designated officer to ensure that safeguarding procedures are followed effectively. Children know what has happened with their complaint and how to take this further if they want to.

Medication procedures are effective. There have been no errors since the last inspection. There are some differences in how staff record instances of children refusing their medication. Although everything is documented, this can be difficult to track due to the inconsistency. This shortfall was rectified during the inspection.

As part of an agreed plan, staff check on a child several times during the night. However, this arrangement has not been kept under review, impacting on the child's privacy. This means this arrangement could be in place longer than necessary. Also, on an incident form, recorded times about staff's practice were not clear, impacting on management oversight regarding how long a child was on their own before staff found them and took necessary steps to keep them safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager is extremely enthusiastic and wants the best for the children. Her energy filters throughout the team to create shared aspirations for children. The manager's influence has had a resounding impact on the team's culture and ethos, significantly impacting on the way staff care for children.

Innovative practice enhances the manager's influence. For example, the manager was involved in research with a local university to think about how diet impacts on children with neurodiversity. This has enabled the manager to understand the foods that are best to help support those needs. The outcome of this research is being shared throughout the company. Additionally, the manager became a trainer in the provider's chosen model of care that the team is now trained in. This has enhanced the care that children receive. The manager has ensured that this is embedded in staff practice.

Moves in and out of the home are exceptionally well planned, tailored to the child. One young person was able to stay after their 18th birthday to make sure their next home was suitable for their needs. A new staff team member started to work with the child before the move. They worked alongside the young person's current staff to develop their knowledge of how best to meet the child's need, particularly in times of crisis. Some staff who had been caring for the young person in the children's home moved with them to their adult home, run by the provider. This provided consistency of care during an anxious time. This child-focused decision enabled a seamless move and helped the young person settle incredibly well.

Staff know the children exceptionally well. They work with children individually to forge close relationships focused on being attuned to the specific needs of the individual child. There is no pressure from the leadership team to move another child into the home until the time is right for the child living at the home, demonstrating child-centred decision-making.

Professional relationships are excellent. For example, for one child, there has been brilliant collaborative work with their new college placement. Professionals speak with high regard about the support they have had from staff to help them understand the child's needs. This has been essential in helping college staff have more in-depth knowledge of how to meet the child's needs. This work promotes a high level of consistency for the child at home and college.

The manager reaches out for guidance when needed, for example asking for an extra occupational health assessment at the home following an increase in unsafe behaviours. She reaches out to ensure the children have what they need. As a result, the home environment was made as safe as possible for the young person and child.

The team is cohesive and highly supportive of each other. The child describes the staff 'like family. Staff thoroughly enjoy working at the home. Strong and aspirational leadership ensures that the staff receive training, guidance and support to undertake their roles and duties to a high standard. The time given to staff helps them feel valued and committed to their roles.

There has been a huge improvement in the way staff write about children in their daily records. Staff write to the child. The tone and words used are helpful for the child should they wish to read their records in later life to help make sense of their time living at the home.

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 registered person must ensure that— any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises— is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21 (c)(iii)(iv))	11 July 2025

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording to support management oversight of their practice. ('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: 2632726

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Ashdown Care Homes Limited

Registered provider address: 5 Ladyrigg, Darras Hall, Ponteland, Northumberland NE20 9QS

Responsible individual: Gary Candlish

Registered manager: Terri-Anne Kelly

Inspector

Miriam Dolman, 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
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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