

2734923

Registered provider: Action for Children

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This charity-run home provides care for up to four children with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, sensory impairment and/or social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

A different provider previously operated this home. The current provider re-registered this home in August 2023.

The registered manager left in December 2023.

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 January 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: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

There are four children living at the home. The children have lived together for several years and are settled. The staff know the children exceptionally well. Parents say that their children have made progress because of living at the home.

Staff understand the children's communication needs. They use pictures, symbols and social stories to help children to express themselves. Communication aids are available to the children throughout the home. This increases the opportunity for all the children to make choices, express their views and initiate interactions.

Staff support a range of activities that reflect the children's interests. Children enjoy art and craft sessions, dancing and baking. The home has its own swimming pool, which the children make good use of. Children benefit from trips to the coast and other activities that support their hobbies and interests, such as horse-riding.

Children's attendance at school is good. Effective communication between the home and schools ensures that there is a joint approach to problem-solving for children who may be experiencing difficulties. Therefore, children benefit from a coordinated approach to education.

Staff encourage children to share their wishes and feelings, using the child's preferred communication methods. Individual sessions with children, along with group meetings provide children with opportunities to talk and communicate with the staff. All of these things enable the children to express their views about the care they receive.

Children spend quality time and enjoy positive experiences with their families. This helps the children to retain their identity and supports their emotional well-being.

Staff meet children's health needs well. They encourage children's healthy eating and healthy living, along with regular exercise. Staff use social stories to increase children's understanding of health appointments. For example, one child has recently had a blood test and an x-ray for the first time. These are achievements that the child and staff are incredibly proud of.

Some improvements have been made to the home's interior. However, there are still areas of the home that require repairs and re-decorating. There are broken light switches, damaged walls and a broken window in the lounge. One child's bedroom is plain by his personal choice however, the walls need redecorating and there are metal shutters on the window. This does not provide children with a homely environment.

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

Safeguarding children is a priority for staff. Staff are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and follow procedures for responding to concerns about children's safety. Recent safeguarding concerns raised by a parent were thoroughly explored and responded to appropriately. Leaders and managers ensure that there is good oversight and management of safeguarding concerns.

Staff enable children to take risks appropriate in accordance with their age and stage of development. One child swims independently at a local swimming pool, with staff observing from the poolside. Another child has written an agreement for use of her mobile phone. Effective and well-planned conversations between the staff and children explore emerging topics including safe internet use, managing emotions and positive relationships. This enhances the children's knowledge of personal safety.

Children's behaviour support plans are comprehensive. Risk assessments are detailed and contain risk-reduction strategies. Following incidents, staff provide detailed incident reports. Monitoring and oversight by team leaders and managers ensures there is effective scrutiny and evaluation of practice.

Records of self-injurious behaviour and self-harm are detailed however, the records have not had leaders or managers oversight for the last month. This does not ensure that any patterns, trends or areas of concern are identified and responded to.

Several fire doors throughout the home do not close properly. Despite being repeatedly reported, the faults have not been rectified and therefore have the potential to compromise children's safety.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has recently left, and recruitment for a new manager is underway. Leaders from the organisation are providing interim management arrangements. This ensures that the effective management and monitoring of the home continues until the position is filled.

Staff said that they feel well supported by leaders and managers. They receive regular supervision sessions and performance reviews. Managers make themselves available to staff for support and advice. The interim manager works on shift, she acts as a positive role model for the staff and has established trusted relationships with the children.

Parents and professionals provided positive feedback about the children's care and progress. Leaders and managers have good working relationships with parents and professionals, which provides consistency for the children.

Staff are experienced and knowledgeable, their understanding of the children's needs is enhanced by the manager's knowledge. Regular team meetings and individual positive behaviour support meetings take place. These guide the staff to implement support in line with the children's plans and provide good outcomes for the children.

A wide range of training is provided. Targeted training further helps to increase the staff's knowledge and skills.

Leaders are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. A detailed workforce-development plan is in place to guide improvements to the quality of care.

Not all of the staff have completed their level 3 qualification within the compulsory timeframe. This means that some staff do not have the relevant qualification required for the role.

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
If the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005(1) applies to the home— the registered person must ensure that the requirements of that Order and any regulations made under it, except for article 23 (duties of employees), are complied with in respect of the home. (Regulation 25 (2)(b)) In particular, ensure that immediate action is taken when a fault is recorded, and ensure that the fire doors close properly.	05 January 2024
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 the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(d)) In particular, ensure that damage to walls and light switches are promptly repaired and that the manager reviews the use of metal shutters in a child's bedroom window.	02 February 2024
For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained— the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma.	02 February 2024

The relevant date is— in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home; or in the case of an individual who was working in a care role in a home on 1st April 2014, 1st April 2016. (Regulation 32 (4)(a)(b) (5)(a)(b)) In particular, ensure that staff achieve a relevant level 3 diploma within the required time frame.	
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Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that incidents of self-injurious behaviour and self-harm are regularly reviewed to ensure that any patterns, trends or areas of concern are identified and responded to. (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.23)

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: 2734923

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

Rachel Watkinson, Social Care Inspector

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