

2737040

Registered provider: Action For Children Services LTD

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a children's charity. It provides care for up to four children who may have social and emotional difficulties.

The manager was registered with Ofsted in July 2023.

There were three children living at the home at the time of this inspection. The inspector spoke to all three children.

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 September 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 28 January 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/01/2025	Full	Good
12/03/2024	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children make excellent progress because of the care that they receive. Staff send postcards to the children when they are on holiday, showing the children that they are always in their thoughts. Staff are highly nurturing towards the children, which helps them to feel genuinely cared about. Children are helped to get ready for bed, and staff read a story to them before being tucked in. This helps make the nighttime routine easier for children.

Children make great progress in education. Children's attendance and achievements at school continue to significantly improve. Staff are advocates for the children when things do not go well in school. They work closely with professionals to ensure that any issues are managed quickly and effectively. One child took part in a harvest festival at school, performing and signing for the audience. This is significant progress.

Some children have arrived at the home with delays in their speech. Staff have worked tirelessly to get to know them and understand them. Staff have helped children develop their vocabulary and how to communicate their feelings. Children are now able to speak sentences and attach words to their big feelings. This has given children a voice when they did not have one.

Children live in an environment where they have a strong sense of safety and belonging. Children can now sit and enjoy meals together, encouraging each other around good table manners. Children told the inspector that they feel part of a family.

Staff use imaginative and patient ways of helping children through new and scary experiences. Staff walked with one child past a barber shop several times over a period. This ensured the child was familiar with the barber shop and the noises from the trimmers and clippers before the child went with staff to get their haircut. This child was then supported by another child in the home to sit in the barber chair for their first haircut.

Children's health needs are a priority. Staff have formed relationships with important services, such as speech and language therapists and the local doctors. This has supported the staff in improving the health needs of the children.

This is a large home that has lots of space outside for children to play. There is a trampoline, swings and a climbing frame that the children use regularly. There is space to play on their bikes together and a quiet road where children play with neighbouring children, safely. The home is warm and welcoming, and the walls are enriched with pictures and cards the children have made. There are some minor

items that require repair that need to be addressed to maintain the quality throughout.

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

The children's relationships with staff are significantly strong and underpin the progress that they have made. Children feel safe and secure and able to share their experiences even when these are negative. This shows they trust the adults around them.

Staff understand risks to children. Children are given the opportunity to explore and take measured risks. As a result, children have been able to make friends and play outside of the home. This means children are having new experiences knowing staff will help them if things do not go well.

Staff fully understand children's feelings and behaviours and manage these effectively. Staff communicate with the children in a way they can understand. Staff make sure that children are nurtured when they make mistakes. This means children learn from their mistakes and feel safe to express themselves in new ways. When physical interventions are used in the home, children are rarely held, instead they are guided by staff. This is a significant change to when children first arrived. Every event is reviewed effectively to ensure that staff's practice was appropriate.

When difficult life events happen away from the home, children are fully supported by a highly skilled staff team that understands the children's behaviours. Staff use social stories to explain these difficult events. This means children can share their feelings with staff in a safe way. This has had a remarkable impact on how children have managed these events.

Leaders manage allegations effectively and ensure that processes are followed. However, on one occasion, staff did not inform the manager of an allegation immediately. While no children were placed at risk this is against the home's policy. The manager addressed this appropriately in supervision and has planned further discussions for team meetings.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is aspirational for children. They have a clear focus on how they can support children to thrive. The manager always seeks new ways of working, using research-based practice to improve care. This gives staff an understanding around hard to manage behaviours and better ways to support the children.

Staff are as committed to helping children thrive as the manager. Staff show nurture and warmth to the children. The children actively seek staff out to spend time and to play with them. The staff fully understand the needs of the children and show

patience and understanding around the children's communication difficulties, to try and help them in their day-to-day lives.

Staff see the manager as an inspiring and positive role model. One staff member said, 'She is the best. I really look up to her.' The relationships that the manager has developed with external services are a benefit to the home. These relationships mean that she can access support quickly when needed. Professionals state that the manager is always available. One professional said, 'When she calls, she has already done half of the work.' The manager is always available for professionals and often supports children in school when their behaviours are difficult to manage. This creates consistency for the children and helps to support them when they really need it.

The manager advocates for the children and actively challenges other professionals. This creates a culture of high hopes and demands for the staff to follow and for the children to benefit from. When appointments with the speech and language therapist were going to be stopped for one child, the management team ensured that these continued to prevent a negative impact on the child.

The manager has high expectations of staff and challenges them often. This creates a culture of high aspiration for the children in the home. The manager wants the staff to achieve their individual goals and works with them to develop further. The manager has a clear model of care, which instils confidence from her team and allows staff to follow her lead. Staff receive reflective supervision sessions. These are focused on the staff's well-being as well as reflecting on the children's progress.

Training is a strength of the home. The registered manager coordinates with an external clinical psychologist. She discusses areas she feels could be improved on. This includes children's behaviours and staff responses. This means that the manager is supportive and nurturing to the children and staff. The staff receive extensive training to be able to support children in the way they need. The staff have developed the skills through training to manage difficult behaviours with the children. This has ensured that children have been helped to develop different ways of thinking, leading to positive outcomes.

The manager's monitoring of the home is comprehensive. She has devised tools that allow her to have oversight of all aspects of care in the home. The manager reviews documents and communicates any changes effectively. This ensures that staff are fully aware of the changes to plans and procedures. The manager is aware of the strengths and areas for improvement in her team and has plans in place to improve these. The manager manages the home effectively but is always present for the children. Children actively seek her out, and the relationships she has developed with them are built on trust.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the home is a nurturing, homely, domestic environment. Areas of the home should be well maintained and free from institutionalised aspects. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that staff report any allegation of abuse immediately to a senior manager within the home. Any allegation of harm or abuse must be addressed in line with the home's child protection policy. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 44, paragraph 9.17)

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: 2737040

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Action For Children Services LTD

Registered provider address: Action for Children, 3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road, Watford WD18 8AG

Responsible individual: Barbara Bolam

Registered manager: Jaimie Shield

Inspector

Gary Smithson, 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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