

SC004429

Registered provider: Action for Children

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This service offers short breaks for up to four children at any one time. Overall, the service provides support to 32 children with learning disabilities, physical disabilities or sensory impairment. This home is operated and managed by an independent provider in partnership with the local authority.

The manager registered with Ofsted in March 2015. She holds a level 5 qualification in leadership and management.

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 March 2023

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: 12 October 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/10/2021	Full	Good
12/11/2019	Full	Good
20/03/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
01/05/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children enjoy a high level of care from a staff team that knows them well and wants the very best for them. Staff understand children's individual needs very well. Communication aids are used to ensure that children can communicate their preferences, and these are always available.

Staff support children to access a range of activities in the service and in the community. For example, in the service, children enjoy messy play, pumpkin carving and singing and dancing with staff. Trips to the community include going out to restaurants, the cinema and to see the Christmas lights and decorations.

Parents are complimentary about their child's stay and talk about the progress their child makes as a result. For example, a parent told the inspector, 'Since starting at the project, our son has become much more confident socially and has actually enjoyed time away from home – something we didn't know would ever be possible. The staff are kind, compassionate and very child-led. We are very happy with the service, and they have been a vital component in all of our family's well-being.'

A social worker told the inspector how well the management team at the service works with other professionals, including health and education professionals. This, alongside the positive work with parents, helps to create a 'home from home'.

Children develop their independence skills as a result of their stay. One child was helping to prepare a salad to go with the evening meal, and other children have developed with their personal hygiene routine.

Ongoing maintenance is taking place to the service. Children enjoy the use of themed bedrooms. Children can bring their own items and staff are also careful to help meet children's individual preferences during their short break. For example, a child was excited to show the inspector his themed bedding.

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

Children feel safe at this service. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and the actions they need to take. They also work with children to help raise their awareness of how to keep themselves safe.

Children have not made any allegations or complaints against staff. They do not go missing from home, and there are no concerns with regards to children being at risk from child sexual exploitation. Staff are trained to understand these risks should they arise.

Staff are responsive to children's care needs and support them when they become upset. They work closely with other professionals to understand the best possible

way to care for children. Clear and simple expectations are set for children, and staff keep to children's routines. This helps children to know what to expect and when.

The registered manager ensures that staff who are recruited to work in the home are subject to all the necessary checks. This helps to ensure that staff who work at the home are safe to do so.

The registered manager and staff ensure that the environment is safe. Some children require specialist equipment, such as hoists, to help them in their day-to-day life. All equipment is maintained by external professionals to ensure it is safe to use. Furthermore, each child has an individualised plan to carefully consider their needs should there be a fire or other emergency in the home. This helps to ensure the children's safety.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The management team works seamlessly and is continuing to develop the service. Managers are child-focused and open to new ways of working, and they are aspirational for what children can achieve.

There have been some difficulties with staff shortages. Managers took the difficult decision to reduce the number of nights the service is open. Recruitment is ongoing, and managers are hopeful that the service will return to seven days a week very soon. Managers have carefully planned the children's stays to ensure that all children continue to receive their agreed number of stays per month. However, as a result, no new children have been admitted to the service.

Despite some of the challenges, staff morale remains high. Staff who were spoken to during the inspection spoke about their love for the job. Most of the staff have worked at the service for a number of years, which provides consistency for the children.

Staff receive the necessary training to ensure that they have the right skills to support children. Team meetings are used as a forum for learning. Workshops are developed, and guest speakers visit the service. This all helps to support staff's continued learning and development.

The requirement raised at the last inspection has been met. The statement of purpose has been updated to make it clear how door alarms are used to support children's safety.

Parents told the inspector about the excellent levels of communication from staff. For example, parents receive 'pre-stay calls' that enable up-to-date information to be shared. This aids the planning of the child's stay. Parents also receive clear feedback about their child's stay. A social worker commented that this really helps parents to be able to relax and make the most of their time while their child is at the service.

During this inspection, a few minor shortfalls were identified. For example, some information in one child's file was confusing and not up to date. It is unclear how children's wishes and feelings are always responded to, and there is no recording system in place to demonstrate how staff have decided which children should enjoy their short breaks together. These appear to be administrative issues that have an impact on the manager's monitoring rather than the quality of the children's stays.

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 leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h)) This specifically relates to the registered person ensuring that children's case files hold up-to-date information about all children, that decisions about which children enjoy their short breaks together are recorded, and that a system is used to understand how children's requests have been actioned.	27 April 2023

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: SC004429

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Action for Children

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

Responsible individual: Craig Hoggarth

Registered manager: Louise Tumulty

Inspector

Louise Battersby, Social Care Inspector

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