

SC057804

Registered provider: Action for Children Services Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is operated by a private company. The home provides residential short breaks for children with learning and/or physical disabilities. Children attend for short breaks in small groups of up to five children at any one time.

The manager registered with Ofsted in August 2022 and is suitably qualified for the role.

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 October 2025

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 **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 18 February 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/02/2025	Full	Good
08/08/2023	Full	Good
25/10/2022	Full	Good
20/01/2022	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

At the time of the inspection, three children were taking a short break at the home. The inspector spoke with children and parents and observed the children to gain an understanding of their experiences. Children who use the service have positive experiences and are supported to make progress. One parent said, 'I know he likes it here as he gets excited as soon as we come up the high street.'

Children's needs are carefully considered when they are referred for a short break. Staff work at each child's own pace to help them settle into their new environment. Staff take time to effectively place children in groups with other children they are likely to get on with. This helps children to enjoy positive social interactions and build friendships with their peers.

The home environment is child centred. There is a sensory room and an interactive garden space which children enjoy. Where possible, children can choose their bedroom, which they use each time they stay. These rooms are colour coordinated which helps familiarise children with their personal space and enables them to settle in quickly.

Staff have a good understanding of children's needs. Each time the child stays at the home, staff ensure that they have up-to-date information about them and their needs. Collaborative work with parents helps staff to understand any changes they need to be aware of, for example changes to the child's medicines, dietary or health needs. This helps children to receive consistent care.

Children are supported to engage in fun activities and new experiences. Children enjoy activities such as visits to theme parks, swimming and trips out into the countryside. Staff capture memories of each child's stay in a newsletter which they share with the child and their family when they leave.

Staff work with children to help them develop new skills. Each child has personal targets and the opportunity to gain a qualification. For example, one child is working towards independently managing their personal hygiene, while another child is gaining confidence in going out into the community. This enables children to gain greater independence and essential life skills they can take back with them to their family home.

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

Staff understand the risks to children's safety and take action to minimise those risks. Before children attend for their short break, staff prepare the home for their arrival in keeping with their individual risk assessments. For example, staff ensure that specified foods are available for children and remove items that may be of harm.

Incidents in the home are minimal. Since the last inspection, no children have gone missing, and no concerns have been raised about the care provided. When children are distressed, staff manage situations well. They take time to understand the reasons for changes in children's behaviour and take effective action to address the cause of a child's distress. This helps children to feel safe as they know staff are there to help them.

When physical interventions are used, they are appropriate and proportionate to keep children or others safe. The child and staff have the opportunity to reflect when a child has been held. If children are unable to verbally share their views, staff make observations to ensure that the intervention has not adversely impacted on the child. However, staff do not always recognise when they are using physical intervention and consequently do not record it as such. This would enable clearer analysis of any themes or trends which could help identify action to minimise the need for physical intervention in the future.

Leaders and staff ensure the environment is safe for children. Play and other equipment are regularly checked and serviced to help minimise the risk of children being injured. All children have personal emergency evacuation plans, and fire drills are conducted regularly to ensure that all staff know what to do to help children in the event of a fire.

Safe recruitment processes are in place. Appropriate checks are carried out for new staff before they work at the home. This ensures that children are cared for by suitably vetted staff.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is led by an experienced manager, who has high expectations and wants the best for children. The manager ensures that children receive individualised care that meets their needs and helps them to achieve. Feedback from parents and professionals is consistently positive. One parent said, 'It [the home] exceeds my expectations.'

Staff are given opportunities and are encouraged to develop. Several of the senior staff members have gone on to obtain leadership and management qualifications and train as trainers in areas such as medicines and physical intervention. They hold lead roles and can share good practice across the staff team. This investment in staff helps to improve the standards of care children receive.

Staff say they feel well supported and enjoy their job. Staff receive regular supervisions in which they can discuss their learning and development needs. They feel the team works well together to meet children's needs. However, staff are not always able to get hold of on-call support when needed for advice. While this has not led to any harm, it could leave children vulnerable in an emergency.

Staff receive regular training opportunities to enable them to care for the children in the home. This includes a comprehensive induction and training programme. However, not all staff have completed training relating to children's specific needs, which would better equip them in supporting the children in their care.

Managers and leaders promote an open and honest culture. When incidents happen, these are shared with family and professionals in a timely way. Staff feel able to raise concerns which enables timely action to be taken to mitigate risk. It also provides opportunities for learning and reflection that supports improvement in staff practice and care.

Children's views and wishes are heard in the delivery of the short stay service. Feedback is obtained at the end of each stay and through the young persons' forum. This is used to adjust the care provided and plans for future visits. During the inspection, staff were consulting with children on new outdoor play equipment using pictures to show the options available.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that records of restraint must be kept and should enable the registered person and staff to review the use of control, discipline and restraint to identify effective practice and respond promptly where any issues or trends of concern emerge. The review should provide the opportunity for amending practice to ensure it meets the needs of each child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59) In particular, the registered manager should ensure that staff recognise when physical intervention has been used and accurately record it as so.
- The registered person should ensure that those with a leadership and/or management role should be visible and accessible to staff and able to deliver their leadership and/or management responsibilities. Any registered manager employed in the home should have sufficient capacity to ensure that the Quality Standards are met for each child in the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11) In particular, the registered manager should ensure that on-call arrangements are working as intended and that staff are able to receive support when needed in a timely way.
- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs and should understand the key role they play in the training and development of staff in the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11) In particular, the registered manager should ensure that all staff receive relevant training that is specific to children's needs.

Information about this inspection

The inspector has 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: SC057804

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: Anna Lindop

Registered manager: Sara Walker-Willett

Inspector

Louise Naylor, Social Care Inspector

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