

SC069336

Registered provider: Prior's Court Foundation

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and run by a charitable organisation. It provides care in 12 houses for up to 67 children with complex autism spectrum disorder. There is an Ofsted-registered school within the grounds. The organisation is also registered with the Care Quality Commission to provide residential homes for adults on the same site.

At the time of the inspection, 60 children were living at the 11 homes that were open.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this site.

The manager registered with Ofsted in May 2023.

Inspection dates: 11 to 13 November 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	good
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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: 17 December 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/12/2024	Full	Good
27/06/2023	Full	Good
03/05/2022	Full	Good
13/07/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children with complex needs consistently make exceptional progress at this home because staff are highly skilled, child focused and dedicated to enabling every child to achieve their potential. Care for each child is highly individualised, with a strong emphasis on developing communication and independence skills. Progress is meticulously captured and monitored through detailed reports that clearly evidence the positive impact of the care provided.

Children who are new to the home settle quickly and make rapid progress. Staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of complex health needs and implement clear, effective plans to ensure consistent care. For example, one child, who was eating a very limited variety of foods, has significantly broadened their food choices since moving in.

The children lead rich, fulfilling lives. Staff plan holiday periods exceptionally well, offering a wide range of stimulating activities, both within and beyond the home. Children enjoy yoga, scavenger hunts, discos and arts and crafts, as well as trips to cinemas, theme parks and local attractions. Scouting sessions are a regular feature, and excellent planning by staff enabled a group of children to experience their first overnight Scouts' trip. Two children also enjoyed their first seaside holiday, an achievement that reflects the managers' and staff's commitment to broadening experiences and promoting independence.

Moves into and out of the home are managed with exceptional sensitivity and care. Thorough assessments ensure that placements are appropriate, and a dedicated transitions team provides consistency and minimises disruption. This highly effective approach ensures smooth transitions and supports children to settle quickly and to thrive.

Staff are exceptionally well trained to meet children's complex needs. A dedicated training team ensures that all staff remain up to date with mandatory and specialist training. Training is tailored to individual children, building staff confidence and enabling them to deliver outstanding care to each child. Additional training is readily available, ensuring that good practice is maintained at all times.

External social care professionals speak extremely positively about their communication with staff and the quality of the care provided to the children. They report significant progress in children's communication, their ability to manage their feelings and behaviours, and their independence. One professional described a child as 'flourishing' in the service.

Children's health needs are met exceptionally well by an on-site team of nurses, occupational therapists, and speech and language therapists, who work closely with external professionals. Staff use creative approaches to prepare children for health

appointments, ensuring positive experiences and reducing anxiety. Recent work to prepare the children for flu vaccinations was highly successful, enabling all of the children to receive immunisations calmly and confidently.

Children's bedrooms are clean, well-organised and personalised to reflect their individuality. Staff use creative strategies, such as changing décor and introducing family photos, to promote a sense of belonging and ownership.

Children's plans are of a very high quality. Plans are clear, detailed and regularly reviewed through 'spotlight' meetings. When children's needs are highly complex, external specialist support is sought promptly, resulting in significant improvements to children's emotional well-being.

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

The safeguarding culture within the service is strong. Staff have an excellent understanding of their responsibilities and act swiftly and effectively when concerns arise. Managers respond promptly, ensuring that appropriate safeguards are implemented without delay. Information is shared openly with parents, professionals and other relevant parties, when this is safe and appropriate, and this helps to promote trust and accountability. The electronic recording system is highly effective, automatically escalating specific concerns to managers, and thus enabling rapid action.

Staff demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of children's behaviours and respond not only effectively but also with real warmth and sensitivity. Interactions are consistently positive. Staff use children's communication aids skilfully to ensure that their voices are heard. When children become distressed, staff respond calmly and in a planned way, which is highly effective in reducing anxiety. Positive behaviour support plans are detailed. They are developed in partnership with the organisation's positive behaviour service, ensuring a consistent approach. Regular meetings allow focused discussions about children's care. As a result of this expert practice, incidents of children becoming distressed or behaving in a manner that poses a risk to their own welfare or to that of others, have significantly reduced.

Professionals report that high levels of supervision and strong relationships between staff and children ensure that the children feel safe and are protected from harm. Staff are confident in raising safeguarding concerns and have confidence that leaders will take decisive action.

Medication is managed safely and effectively. There have been some medication errors since the last inspection, none of which have resulted in harm to children. However, reviewing of these incidents has led to improvements to practice. Leaders have revised the medication policy and introduced new reporting levels. Sophisticated systems are in place to monitor and analyse errors, and responses to any errors are comprehensive and timely. Staff receive high-quality training in medication administration, and learning from

incidents is embedded in practice. These oversight measures have resulted in improved safety and practice in administering medication.

Plans for children who may go missing from home are clear, detailed and well understood by staff. There is a coordinated site-wide response, and individualised plans ensure swift and effective action. When one child attempted to leave the premises, staff acted quickly to maintain sight of the child and ensure their safety.

Any restrictions imposed on children are reviewed regularly so that they do not remain in place any longer than necessary and are highly individualised to meet children's needs. Staff work closely with local authorities to ensure that appropriate authorisations are in place, and they will challenge professionals when necessary.

Risk management is proactive and thorough. Staff use effective systems to monitor and reduce risks, particularly in the home environment. Regular checks ensure that the home remains safe and fully meets the needs of the children.

Staff recruitment and development processes are excellent. The introduction of a dedicated recruitment and on-boarding team has significantly enhanced these systems. This team carries out a range of additional measures during recruitment, including initial screening calls with prospective candidates and comprehensive online checks. These steps ensure that candidates not only align with the organisation's values but are also fully vetted to work safely with vulnerable children. This additional layer of scrutiny provides robust safeguards that help to keep children safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager demonstrates strong oversight of the service. Effective monitoring and review systems are in place, enabling the manager to identify both strengths and areas for development. Information gathered through these processes is used to create clear and purposeful action plans, which drive continuous improvement across the service. Staff say that they feel well supported by managers to carry out their roles.

There are clear plans and well considered to reopen the final home on the site. When a previous home was opened, this led to significant internal staff movement, causing some instability. Managers have reflected on this and learned from the experience. As a result, the forthcoming reopening has been delayed to allow sufficient time to recruit a full, dedicated staff team. This approach is intended to maintain continuity for existing staff and to ensure that children already living at the homes experience minimal disruption.

The service currently relies on a high number of agency staff. However, these staff are long standing, fully integrated into the team and are regarded as core members. They are highly valued, and a dedicated manager now oversees and supports their work. Agency staff receive regular supervision and debriefs, consistent with permanent staff. The service also invests in agency staff by supporting them to complete the childcare

diploma. This approach helps the agency staff to feel valued and committed to their roles, ensuring that children benefit from consistent, high-quality care.

New staff benefit from a well-structured and comprehensive induction programme. Important elements, such as safeguarding training, are completed before staff have direct contact with children. The induction includes training and observations, which help staff to feel well prepared and confident when they begin caring for the children. Ongoing support is provided beyond the induction period, ensuring that staff continue to develop their skills and maintain high standards of care.

Staff receive regular, reflective supervision and annual appraisals. Supervision sessions provide opportunities for feedback on the care delivered and they support staff to develop their practice. Annual appraisals include clear targets to promote professional growth. In addition, some staff benefit from mentoring by care managers to prepare them for future career progression. There is a strong and positive culture that encourages staff development and progression within the service.

Staff celebrate each other's achievements. They attend an annual awards ceremony where good practice is recognised and celebrated. Stakeholders acknowledge the team's achievements by sponsoring the event. This fosters a sense of pride and achievement among the team.

Staff use physical interventions with children only when necessary, and these are reviewed and monitored by leaders. Records include key information, but some reports are not fully completed. One child's debrief was not fully documented, and one management review was delayed, meaning that lessons were not identified promptly. The manager and the responsible individual are aware of these shortfalls and are working with care managers to improve the quality and consistency of record-keeping.

On occasion, safeguarding concerns have not been reported to regulatory bodies within the required timeframe. This limits external oversight of how managers respond to concerns and maintain children's safety. On these occasions, there does not appear to have been any direct negative consequence for children.

The homes are arranged to meet children's needs, and multisensory rooms provide valuable support for those with sensory needs. Communal areas are generally maintained to a good standard, but this is not consistent across all homes. Some homes are well presented, while others require prompt attention to minor issues to ensure that environments remain safe and welcoming. For example, one bathroom had a broken shower handle, and a paddling pool had not been stored away for winter. These shortfalls had not been identified by care managers.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that they review the use of control, discipline and restraint to identify effective practice, assess the quality of reports and respond promptly where any issues or trends of concern emerge. Any child who has been restrained should be given the opportunity to express their feelings about their experience of the restraint as soon as is practicable. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)
- The registered person should have a system in place so that all serious events are notified, within 24 hours, to the appropriate people. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.13)
- The registered person should ensure that the homes are well-maintained environments. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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: SC069336

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: Prior's Court Foundation

Responsible individual: Natalie Boothroyd

Registered manager: Lisa Potheary

Inspectors

Louise Webling, Social Care Inspector

Mark Dawkins, Social Care Inspector

Shaheda Dhandia, Social Care Inspector

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