

SC402385

Registered provider: Priory Education Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A private company owns this home. It provides accommodation for up to five children and young people, aged between 11 and 19 years, who have complex needs which may include autism, spectrum disorders and complex associated difficulties.

At the time of this inspection the registered manager post was vacant.

Due to COVID 19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

Inspection dates: 16 to 17 June 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 7 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/01/2020	Full	Good
04/07/2018	Full	Good
23/05/2017	Full	Good
09/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

The two children currently living at the home receive individualised care and support. Staff know the children well and are having a positive impact on their progress. For example, one child has developed skills that enable her to regulate and discuss her emotions. This has helped the child to ask for help when she needs it and to remain calm when she is feeling anxious.

Staff listen to the children. There are regular key-worker sessions. Children confirmed that staff consult them on topics such as what they want to eat and what activities they would like to do. This is ensuring that children play an active role in their day-to-day care and influence their plans for the future.

Staff have mixed success in promoting children's education. For example, delays and poor communication have meant that one child has been out of full-time education for seven months. A new school for the child has been identified, but funding from the local authority had not been agreed. Managers and staff have not appropriately challenged and worked with partner agencies to enable a quicker return to school for the child.

For those children being tutored at home, staff work with tutors to encourage children's engagement. However, a lack of communication between services meant that an agreement for a two-week extension to the home-tutoring for one child, had not been communicated. As a result, the child did not receive the planned tutoring.

Despite these shortfalls, staff in most instances work hard to support children's engagement with education. Before children start at new colleges or schools, staff support them to visit these settings so that they are confident in attending on their own. Staff help children to complete any homework to promote their learning.

The home environment is badly maintained. Rooms throughout the house are in a poor decorative state. For example, flood damage to the cellar, where the children's laundry is situated, has not been repaired. Historical damage to a bedroom in an annex of the house, has not been repaired. Although not in current use, broken windows are boarded up and make the outside of the house look unwelcoming. This does not encourage children to develop a sense of belonging or take pride in their home or make them feel that they are valued. This has been recognised by the responsible individual and a refurbishment plan is underway. At the time of the inspection, children were enjoying choosing paint colours and new items for their bedrooms.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Typically, partnership work with external safeguarding agencies is effective and reduces risks for children. Furthermore, on most occasions, staff are successful at taking the action required to protect children. For example, prompt action is taken by staff if there are signs that a child is at risk of harm. Despite this, managers do not always provide staff with clear information to help them understand how best to keep a child safe. For example, before one child moved into the home, staff were not provided with the required information about a child's risks and the strategies that staff should follow to manage these. This resulted in staff being concerned and confused as to whether they were appropriately meeting the child's needs. The responsible individual has acted to reassure staff and give them clarity on what they need to do. Furthermore, a professionals meeting has been arranged with the placing authority which will further inform the care planning for the child.

Staff work hard to build and maintain positive relationships with children. These relationships provide the basis from which staff can successfully promote children's good behaviour. Children respect and listen to staff's guidance and advice. This means that overall, children's behaviours are well managed.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The registered manager post has recently become vacant. There are appropriate interim management arrangements in place while a new registered manager is recruited.

During this inspection, the staff sleep-in arrangements were found to be in need of improvement. The layout of the two sleep-in bedrooms and ensuite did not provide staff with adequate privacy. During the inspection, the responsible individual addressed this immediately by allocating a different room for staff sleep-in bedrooms. Furthermore, he has submitted a variation request to Ofsted, to reduce the number of children to whom the service provides care and accommodation, from five to four children.

Some case records are poor. Managers and staff have not made detailed records of conversations with placing authorities and virtual heads about some important matters. These include education, mental health assessments, deprivation of liberty orders and children's annual reviews. This limits the availability of required information for staff. In some cases, the absence of relevant information means that some matters that are important to children, do not get promptly followed up or addressed.

There is a lack of clear management direction, support and communication for staff. There are regular team meetings, supervision sessions and appraisals. However, these systems lack quality and do not help staff to aspire to the aims of the service. Supervisors and facilitators do not provide staff with support to enable them to

reflect on significant issues in children's lives or engage in the operation and development of the home.

Staff receive good-quality training that supports them to meet the needs of the children they care for. There is a process to identify additional staff training needs, specific to any new child moving into the home. However, in one case this has not resulted in the staff team receiving the required training. As a result, the staff do not have the highest level of understanding of the needs of a child in their care.

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
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans; seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs. (Regulation 5 (a)(b))	31 July 2021
The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(viii))	31 July 2021
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 staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i))	31 July 2021

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))	31 September 2021
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— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home’s statement of purpose. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a))	31 July 2021

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate resources to support their training needs. This specifically relates to learning about Tourette’s syndrome. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 53, paragraph 10.11)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home’s policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person is responsible for ensuring that all staff follow the home’s policies and procedures for the benefit of the children in the home’s care. Everyone working at the home must understand their roles and responsibilities and what they are authorised to decide on their own initiative. There should be clear lines of accountability. Each home must have clear arrangements in place to maintain effective management when the manager is absent, off duty or on leave. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 54, paragraph 10.20)

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: SC402385

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Priory Education Services Limited

Registered provider address: Priory Group, Fifth Floor, 80 Hammersmith Road, London, Middlesex W14 8UD

Responsible individual: Dwane Eacock

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Dawn Bennett, Social Care Inspector

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