

SC408655

Registered provider: Priory Education Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is operated by a large national provider. It provides accommodation and support for up to seven children who may have a learning difficulty and/or have autism spectrum disorder.

The home has been without a registered manager since June 2021.

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

We last visited this setting on 15 December 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 7 to 8 September 2021

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: 11 June 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/06/2019	Full	Good
06/12/2018	Full	Good
09/08/2018	Full	Inadequate
04/01/2017	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children make significant progress while living in the home. They benefit from consistency in the approach by the committed staff team in order to meet their goals and targets. Parents and social workers are highly complimentary about the progress children make, which is often beyond expectations. Children learn independence skills through clear plans and approaches, ensuring that they develop to the best of their abilities. The team work effectively to promote the best outcomes and their genuine desire to see children progress is evident throughout the home.

Regular communication with parents and other professionals ensures that there is a continuous and joined-up approach to care. This means that everyone can celebrate the successes or consider different approaches if something is not going to plan.

Children are supported to develop healthier lifestyles and learn what this means for them. This could be trying a wider range of foods, doing more physical activity or learning to use the toilet independently. Children's development is enhanced through good joint-working arrangements which focus on children's emotional and physical well-being. Liaison with the school's therapy teams, and child and adolescent mental services, helps to improve approaches to managing emotional well-being and address behaviours which others may find challenging.

Children are recognised as individuals. Their culture and identity are promoted through their individual plans. Close liaison with parents means that no assumptions are made about the child's heritage and how the family celebrates various events. One parent commented on how well the staff have ensured that her child's cultural needs are met, and that staff have asked for her recipes and advice on making the meals he enjoys with his family. Monthly cultural days promote understanding of other countries and communities and include music, art, dressing up and making culturally specific foods.

The home has communication strips in key places for children to show how they are feeling or approach staff with anything they want. One-to-one sessions are well planned and support children in meeting their targets. Records are clear and have face symbols for the child to pick, to show how they found the session and how they were feeling at the beginning and the end. Social stories, alongside other communication aids, ensure that children understand what is being said and also communicate their views.

Children all attend school, and strong links ensure that there is consistency in the approach to education. Children engage in a wide range of socially and emotionally stimulating activities in the home and community. A colourful book of summer holiday activities shows photographs of the children trying new things and enjoying themselves individually and when possible, with others in the home. Children are

supported to get dressed up for meals out, but also relax and get messy and wet during messy play and sensory activities.

Children are listened to and consulted on all aspects of their care. Group and one-to-one meetings provide children with a space to share their views and ideas on activities and meal choices. The recent installation of new garden play equipment involved children choosing what they would like. The new swing is a firm favourite and children were seen developing their skills in taking turns to use this.

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

Children's actions and demeanour show they are confident and feel safe in their home. Staff have a strong understanding of how to respond to any safeguarding or child protection concerns. Records show excellent joint working with partner agencies and reviews of processes and actions to prevent children coming to harm.

Staff are skilled at redirecting children and provided stimulating activities to reduce the risk of them becoming bored or agitated. Staff also quickly spot when a child may be becoming anxious or upset and will actively redirect them or offer appropriate support and comfort at these times. Plans are clear on how to help children who are becoming unsettled. Staff consistently follow these so that children know how they will be helped. Staff recognise all behaviour as a communication and seek to help the child explore what is wrong.

Physical intervention is used on occasions and all records are clear on the use of and need for the intervention. Debriefs with staff are professionally challenging when necessary and provide them with other avenues they could have followed. Children's debriefs are tailored to individual communication tools and understanding, with a learning and development outcome.

Children rarely go missing from the home. Extra security measures have been put in place to prevent children leaving the home unsupervised, as they would be at significant risk otherwise. Children's safety online is promoted through the use of a system that restricts access to content. On one occasion this did not work. Staff noted immediately and took appropriate action to protect the child from viewing inappropriate content. Sessions with the child helped him to understand what is safe for him to view online.

Risk assessments are clear and allow for children to take appropriate risks and engage in activities that are suitable to their age, development and understanding. Children are protected from avoidable risk through safer recruitment practices and regular monitoring of the home's fire and safety mechanisms. The appointment of a maintenance person for the home has significantly improved the response times for repairing and redecorating as required. However, the storage of play equipment and children's access to choosing activities is an issue. The organisation's purchasing process creates barriers to purchasing the necessary storage. This includes restrictions on where items can be bought from.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The change in leadership in the home has been a smooth transition. Staff, parents and social workers comment that the same good-quality service for children and communication levels have continued. The home's manager is in the process of applying to be registered with Ofsted. The management team are experienced and enthusiastic. They seek the highest possible outcomes for children and motivate the staff team to be equally as ambitious.

Children are recognised as individuals who live in a group. It is clear from managers and staff that they respect each child's choices and individuality. Children's progress is closely monitored through daily records, monthly reviews and their target trackers. Children make significant achievements while living at the home, from learning to dress themselves and use the toilet independently, to making meals and learning to tolerate others in the community. Plans are individualised and regularly reviewed. Should there be any concerns, managers are confident in liaising with the multi-disciplinary team from school and partner agencies to review approaches to care or placement as necessary. Managers are confident in challenging partner agencies if necessary, should they be falling short in their service to children.

Staff say they are well supported by the management team and by the staff group as a whole. They work cohesively to promote the best outcomes for children. Staff say they have regular supervision which they find supportive and challenging as necessary. Training has mostly been based online during the periods of local and national lockdowns. Some training is beginning to be in person. Staff say they have the training and skills they need to meet the needs of the children. Team meetings and the staff 'to read' folder are used effectively to share practice ideas and develop changes in approach to caring for children.

The managers use effective tools to monitor the quality of care provided in the home. However, the organisation's process for sharing the statement of purpose with Ofsted is flawed, as it has not reached Ofsted since 2019.

Regular reviews by the responsible individual help feed into the development plan along with manager's reviews. The independent visitor provides detailed reports and detail of the areas for development. The management team take effective action when there are any identified shortfalls. The home's development plan has time limited actions and is regularly reviewed.

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

- The registered person should ensure that the process for purchasing equipment does not unduly delay or restrict the purchase. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 29, paragraph 5.18)
- The registered person should ensure that the process for sending the statement of purpose to Ofsted is suitable. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 33, paragraph 7.3)

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: SC408655

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: Hannah Cox

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Jennie Christopher, Social Care Inspector

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