

SC408655

Registered provider: Aspris Children's 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 care for up to seven children who may have a learning difficulty and/or autism. There were four children living at the home at the time of this inspection.

The manager was registered with Ofsted in December 2023.

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 January 2024

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: 14 July 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/07/2022	Full	Good
07/09/2021	Full	Good
11/06/2019	Full	Good
06/12/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children have positive experiences living at this home. The staff provide the children with fun activities outside of school. They are supported to safely enjoy walks to local parks, outings to the beach and in-house activities such as painting or listening to music in the lounge. The children enjoy their spacious garden with a trampoline and swings to play on. They are encouraged to get involved with tending to the vegetable patches in the garden alongside the staff. These opportunities and experiences provide the children with full, enriched lives.

Staff are attuned to the children's complex individual needs and support them to express themselves in different ways. The staff encourage children's verbal communication. This is supplemented through the use of the children's preferred communication aids. The staff encourage the children to share their wishes and feelings. They help them develop the skills to make choices, such as for activities and for their meals. The children are empowered to have a voice. This helps them feel valued.

Staff are mindful of the children's complex needs, yet they remain aspirational for them. The good-quality care the staff provide has particularly contributed to one child's improved self-confidence and independence skills. Another child now enjoys trips out in the community. This is a significant change for this child who previously found such experiences a challenge. A further child's ongoing health condition is now well managed as staff have been able to ensure that the child receives the support they need. The staff have developed effective partnership working with social care, education and health professionals. This has successfully ensured that the children are well supported to maintain optimum health and are making individually significant progress in different areas of their lives.

Social care professionals and children's parents spoke positively about the care and support staff provide to the children. They are kept well informed by the staff. The staff are an integral part of the team around the child. They attend the children's review meetings and actively contribute to care planning. One parent described there being a 'real partnership' between them and the staff. They said that staff are welcoming and have taken onboard their views. This helped the parent to continue to feel actively involved in their child's life.

The children enjoy living in a cosy, welcoming and well-maintained home. Their bedrooms are well personalised based on their interests. They choose the colours of their walls and their bedding. Photographs of the children and their families in their bedrooms give an important continued link to family. The children's photographs and artwork, displayed throughout the home, gives a real sense that this is their home and that they are important.

The staff encourage the children to explore issues of diversity on culture days. They get to experience food from different cultures and to learn about different countries around the world. The staff support and encourage the children to understand differences in people, with staff reinforcing that everyone should be treated equally. Staff work closely with families to understand and meet the needs of children from different faiths and cultures. A child of a particular faith is supported to say their prayers at mealtimes. The child's parent values this.

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

The staff understand the children's needs and vulnerabilities. They know the children well and are adept at responding to their non-verbal cues appropriately. They regularly seek the children's wishes and views through different ways, individual to each child's needs and preferences. Two children use their communication iPads, while another enjoys chats with staff. This child-focused approach helps to maintain secure, trusting relationships between the children and the staff.

The staff are guided by detailed individualised children's risk assessments. These effectively guide staff on the actions to take to safeguard the children. When staff use physical intervention to support children, this has been at the lowest level possible to ensure the safety of the child or others. Records of these incidents are clearly recorded. The manager monitors these incidents. Reflective conversations take place with the child and staff involved, to see how people feel about these incidents and look at how they may be avoided in the future.

Children are settled and do not go missing from home. Even so, staff are aware of actions to take to minimise the risk of children going missing from home and what to do should it happen.

Staff have completed training that has supported their understanding on how best to care for the children. They are further guided on caring for the children through discussions during team meetings and individual supervision sessions. This ensures that staff are effectively supported to continue to meet children's complex needs well.

Pre-employment suitability checks are carried out to a good standard. This informs decision-making about the applicant's suitability to work with children. This reduces the risk of unsuitable people working with the children. The manager ensures that they employ staff with suitable aptitude and the relevant skills and experience.

Staff ensure that children's health needs are met. On a small number of occasions, medication administration has been delayed or missed. Staff have sought suitable advice on these occasions to ensure the children's continuing safety and well-being. The staff and managers have learned from these events. The learning from incident reviews has led to tighter processes being put into place to help to prevent further occurrences.

When incidents occur, staff actions to manage risks have been appropriate in most instances. However, staff have not always been alert to the risk that some toys in the home present to some children. On one occasion, a child ingested an unknown number of marbles from a game. There was delay in appropriate medical care being sought for this child. The manager did not ensure that a further serious incident was notified to Ofsted. These shortfalls happened some months ago prior to the current manager taking up post. The current registered manager has reviewed these incidents, highlighted learning, and put measures in place to prevent similar incidents from occurring.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There has been a change of senior leadership in the home since the last inspection. The current registered manager and senior leaders are child focused. They recognise the importance of children being supported to have a voice, and they have introduced different ways to encourage children's participation. These include staff regularly spending focused time with the children, seeking their views, and using their preferred communication aids to ensure that interactions are meaningful.

The manager models the expected standard of care that they expect staff to provide the children. When concerned about health processes that undermined children's medication being received on time, the manager and staff raised this concern with health professionals on more than one occasion. This resulted in a new and improved process.

There is great focus from the manager on ensuring that staff feel well supported in their roles. Staff welfare and development are explored during supervision and team meetings. This ensures that the children continue to be cared for by motivated, skilled staff.

Staff are provided with a selection of good-quality training. Additional specialist training is arranged by the manager to ensure that children's individual needs are well met. This includes training on pica and pathological demand avoidance. However, some required refresher training for several staff members is overdue and the manager's written oversight of staff training is not up to date.

The manager is aware of the home's strengths and areas for development. Areas of focus for development include recording of key-work sessions with children and enhancing the effectiveness of supervision with staff. The manager has proactively reviewed incidents that occurred before her time and developed plans to minimise the risk of repeat incidents. This demonstrates the manager's strong commitment to developing the service and ensuring that children continue to receive good-quality 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, The 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 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— take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(vi)(b)) In particular, the registered person is to ensure that when needed urgent medical care is sought for children without delay and that the home is free from potential hazards.	25 March 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that they have a system in place so that all serious events are notified, within 24 hours, to the appropriate people, including the regulator. The system should cover the action that should be followed if the event arises at the weekend or on a public holiday. Notification must include details of the action taken by the home's staff in response to the event. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.13)
- The registered person should ensure that they make suitable arrangements for the safe handling and administration of medication to children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)
- The registered person should ensure that records demonstrate that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs, and that the registered manager understands their key role 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)

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: Aspris Children's Services Limited

Registered provider address: The Forge, Church Street West, Woking, Surrey
GU21 6HT

Responsible individual: Helen Llewellyn

Registered manager: Amy Sumner

Inspector

Sasha Reid, Social Care Inspector

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