

SC412971

Registered provider: Aspris New 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 private organisation. It provides care for up to four children with learning disabilities.

There has been no registered manager since November 2021. While a new manager has started work at the home, she has been absent from work for some time.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 9 March 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 February 2022

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: 29 May 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/05/2019	Full	Good
20/03/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
06/06/2018	Full	Good
10/07/2017	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

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

Children living at the home have complex needs and they are making good progress. They benefit from good levels of individual care and support and a structured daily routine. This predictable care helps to reduce children's anxiety about the day ahead.

Children's transitions in and out of the home are well managed. The needs of children living in the home are also well considered, resulting in them being able to live together compatibly.

Children were observed to have positive relationships with staff. However, there has been a heavy reliance on the use of agency staff over recent months because the organisation has struggled to recruit permanent staff. While the organisation has attempted to limit the impact on children by using regular agency staff, there has been a significant number of temporary staff at the home. Children struggle with unfamiliar adults, and this has a negative impact on their experience at the home. Children's parents and their social workers express concern about the turnover of staff because it results in a lack of consistency for children.

Staff spoken to during the inspection were enthusiastic about their role. Staff talk warmly about the children in their care. They are committed to providing children with positive experiences and supporting them to achieve positive outcomes. Children are encouraged to try new activities and be physically active. They regularly enjoy trips to the beach and to the park. There is also play equipment in the garden.

All children attend school on a daily basis. The school is managed by the same organisation, and staff from the home support the children during the school day. This helps to ensure consistency and aids communication between home and school.

Staff facilitate regular time for children to meet with their family members. Family members are welcome to visit the home, or staff will provide support for children to visit their family homes. Family members and social workers have historically received a lovely update regarding their child, including information and photos of their activities and achievements each week. However, this has not been completed for a number of months, due to staffing difficulties.

Children are making good progress towards reaching their individualised targets. For some this may be to carry their plate to the kitchen after eating, while for others this may involve helping staff to make the meal itself. Children are praised for their achievements. However, there has been a reduction in individual work sessions with children over recent months, so their views are not always understood or documented and changes made to their care plan as a result.

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

Children's individual vulnerabilities and risks are understood by the permanent staff working in the home. However, children are not always cared for in line with their risk management plans. Also, some documents have not been reviewed, despite there being more up-to-date information. It is not clear when waking night staff have checked on children, as this detail is not being recorded. This potentially compromises children's safety.

Safeguarding procedures are not always followed. Staff do not always notify Ofsted when a serious incident occurs and some notifications that have been made have provided insufficient detail. This prevents Ofsted from ensuring that the correct course of action was taken at the time. Similarly, staff do not always seek further health advice following a child's self-injurious behaviour.

Children live in a welcoming environment, although it is basically furnished to reflect the complex needs of the children living here. However, one bathroom in the home requires a replacement bath as a matter of urgency. Children have slipped in the bath on more than one occasion, but at the time of the inspection the bath was still waiting to be replaced. Assurances were provided during the inspection that children would use the other bathroom in the home, until this has been actioned.

Physical interventions are rare in this home. Positive behaviour support plans help to ensure that staff know the best way to support each child. Staff are resilient, despite some challenging behaviours exhibited by children. Following any physical intervention, children are appropriately debriefed with the aid of a social story, to help them understand why staff needed to intervene.

Children have personal emergency evacuation plans so that staff know how best to support them to leave the house in an emergency. However, fire evacuation drills are not held frequently. Some children and staff have not completed a drill for many months. This leaves them vulnerable in the event of a fire.

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

A qualified and experienced manager has been appointed. However, she has yet to apply for registration. She is supported by a recently appointed deputy manager and two assistant managers. This new management team is yet to become established and drive forward improvements at the home.

Staffing challenges have had a negative impact on the learning and development of staff. This is a largely unqualified staff team. Only three individuals who work at the home have completed the necessary Level 3 qualification in residential childcare. Four staff members have exceeded the two-year period permitted in which to complete this. Staff have also not completed all essential mandatory training.

Consequently, they are not always equipped with the required knowledge and skills to manage situations in the most effective way.

Permanent staff receive an annual performance appraisal and individual supervision sessions. While there have been gaps in monthly supervision sessions, these have now been addressed. However, agency staff do not receive regular supervision sessions. Consequently, not all staff receive sufficient support and guidance or are offered the opportunity to reflect on their practice. This is especially pertinent because of the home's heavy reliance on agency staff.

Weaknesses in management monitoring were evident at this inspection. Managers' tasks have sometimes been left uncompleted, due to staffing difficulties and senior staff being required to cover staffing shortfalls.

It was difficult to access information during the inspection. Records at the home are not always cross-referenced to other records, or they fail to capture the required details. The staff duty roster is inaccurate and the staff training matrix does not correlate with the staffing annex of the statement of purpose. Internal investigation reports have been completed following any serious incidents. These have resulted in lessons being learned and amendments to staff practice. However, the lessons learned summary reports could not be located during this inspection.

A new management team is now in place and there are signs of progress. Staff meetings are now taking place and the home has a recently drafted development plan to help focus on areas for improvement. Senior managers are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and they are working to address the shortfalls.

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
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; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; 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)(a)(i)(v)(d)) In particular, ensure that children's risk management plans are adhered to at all times and updated as required and that swift action is taken to replace one bath in the home, which has proved to be a slip hazard for children.	4 April 2022
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—	4 April 2022

ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(e)(h)) In particular, ensure that permanent staff are recruited to work in the home and that the use of agency staff is minimised. Ensure that staff are able to access specific training to meet the needs of the children living in the home and that management monitoring successfully identifies areas for improvement. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	
After consultation with the fire and rescue authority, the registered person must— ensure, by means of fire drills and practices at suitable intervals, that persons working at the home and, so far as reasonably practicable, children are aware of the procedure to be followed in case of fire. (Regulation 25 (1)(d)) Specifically, ensure that all staff and children are enabled to take part in regular fire evacuation drills.	4 April 2022
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The requirements are that— the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform; For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained— the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or	31 May 2022

a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma. The relevant date is— in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home. (Regulation 32 (1) (3)(b) (4)(a)(b) (5)(a)) Specifically, ensure that staff's completion of the Level 3 diploma is prioritised.	
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b)) Specifically, ensure that staff who have completed probation are enrolled on the Level 3 diploma and that agency staff receive supervision, as outlined in the organisation's own policy.	4 April 2022
Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children's home. The registered person must— maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4; ensure that the records are kept up to date; and retain the records for at least 15 years from the date of the last entry. (Regulation 37 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c)) In particular, ensure that the staff duty roster is a record of the actual roster worked. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	4 April 2022
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—	4 April 2022

a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation;

an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious;

there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there;

a child protection enquiry involving a child —

is instigated; or

concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or

there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious.
(Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e))

In particular, ensure that HMCI is informed in all circumstances that meet the above criteria.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children are consulted regularly on their views about the home's care, to inform and support continued improvement in the quality of care provided. Due consideration should be given to the child's cognitive ability in the development and implementation of any consultation processes. Children should be able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted upon. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11)
- The registered person should ensure that they actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring (including under regulations 44 and 45) to ensure continuous improvement. They should be skilled in anticipating difficulties and reviewing incidents, such as learning from disruptions and placement breakdowns. They are responsible for proactively implementing lessons learned and sustaining good practice. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)

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: SC412971

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Aspris New Education Services Limited

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

Responsible individual: Wendy Sparling

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Mandy Williams, Social Care Inspector
Claire Hobbs, Social Care Inspector

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