

SC424089

Registered provider: Action for Children Services Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a short-break service for children with learning disabilities, sensory impairment and physical disabilities.

A national children's charity runs the home, which comprises 2 separate houses. One is specifically for children who may have behaviours that challenge associated with their disability, and the other is for children who require some degree of medical care.

The home is registered to provide care for up to 14 children. However, the needs of the children mean that occupancy rarely reaches this level. Five children were staying in the home at the time of the inspection. A sixth child was visiting as part of their introduction to the home.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since October 2016.

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 June 2026

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

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: 13 January 2026

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/01/2026	Full	Requires improvement to be good
01/07/2024	Full	Good
17/05/2023	Full	Good
24/05/2022	Full	Good

Summary of findings

Children enjoy positive relationships with staff and make some progress. Children take part in a range of enjoyable activities, and their achievements are celebrated. However, weaknesses in recording, planning and oversight limit the home's ability to fully understand and evidence children's progress. Inconsistent management oversight, out-of-date training and gaps in essential documentation mean that children's safety, progress and experiences are not consistently well supported.

Inspection judgements

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

Children make some progress, particularly in relation to their physical and health needs, which are consistently met. Children benefit from a range of enjoyable activities that broaden their experiences and contribute positively to their development. For one child, a recent trip out to a local venue was a significant achievement. All children's achievements are celebrated.

Children show excitement when arriving because staff know the children well and build positive relationships that support their emotional security. Children stay in a bedroom familiar to them, which is generally personalised for their stay. However, some children do not have any personal or familiar items in their rooms. Despite staff being aware, there has not been any action to ensure that these comforting items are provided.

Children are consistently treated with dignity and respect. Caring staff protect their privacy and ensure that children's personal space is not interrupted unnecessarily, promoting a sense of safety and trust.

Staff and managers have high aspirations for children and set realistic goals. Despite this, inconsistent recording significantly hinders the staff's ability to track progress and ensure actions are completed, such as actions agreed at children's care planning meetings.

In addition, staff have failed to ensure that documents are consistently updated, including relevant information that informs children's daily care arrangements. This limits children's opportunities to make sustained progress and means their needs may not be fully understood or met.

Preparation and planning for children new to the service are thorough and carefully considered, with clear attention given to minimising disruption for the children already living in the home. This creates a positive environment where children are happy and enjoy shared activities. This was witnessed during the inspection.

Children's cultural needs are supported through thoughtful engagement with their families. However, gaps in some records mean essential information is missing. Nonetheless, staff consistently ensure that children's specialist dietary requirements are understood and reliably provided. This positively supports children's cultural identity.

Staff have a clear understanding of children's varied communication needs, and further training is already in place to strengthen this. This is with the intention of staff being better equipped to capture and evidence children's views and wishes with greater accuracy and confidence.

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

Overall, staff keep children safe. However, significant gaps and out-of-date training have not been addressed with sufficient urgency. This is specifically in relation to safeguarding and children with complex health needs, including fire safety and supporting children with swallowing difficulties. Furthermore, no risk assessments were in place to manage the risks associated with staff working without the required training. This has the potential to expose children to avoidable harm.

Risk assessments contain relevant information. However, these are not consistently updated. For example, children's dietary requirements have not been updated or shared with the cook. As a result, children could be offered food that may make them unwell. While children are encouraged to make choices about their meals, the lack of accurate information undermines safe and informed decision-making.

Staff demonstrate good knowledge of children's complex health needs, related risks and medical conditions, including epilepsy and required nighttime checks. These are clearly documented and understood by staff.

Physical restraint is used only when necessary. Children, where appropriate, and staff receive timely debriefs. However, the quality of recording and the level of professional curiosity applied to some incidents prevent patterns and learning from being fully explored.

Medical professionals in the team receive regular clinical supervision and maintain their fitness to practise. There have been no medication errors since the previous inspection, and all staff are up to date with medication training. Nurses directly support staff and provide reassurance in an area of practice that is critical to children's health.

The home environment is generally well maintained. The reception area is bright, welcoming and child friendly. However, during the inspection, the kitchen was found to fall below expected standards of hygiene and maintenance. Leaders took immediate action to address this shortfall. Equipment across the home is otherwise well maintained.

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

The registered manager and responsible individual were both on annual leave at the time of inspection, but senior leaders were present. The inspection was supported by a committed and knowledgeable deputy manager.

Management monitoring is ineffective and has failed to identify the shortfalls found during the inspection. Leaders and managers have implemented quality assurance systems and development plans; however, these lack measurable outcomes, timescales and clearly defined responsibilities. Insufficient reviews of actions by leaders and managers mean children's progress is not evidenced and necessary improvements are not secured.

Staff receive regular practice-related supervision. However, the quality of these sessions is variable, and priority actions are not continuously reviewed. Senior managers have failed to identify or address some concerns. This means staff are not consistently supported or challenged to improve practice.

Annual appraisals have been completed for all staff. However, they do not support staff to develop or address weaknesses in their practice. For example, they do not strengthen staff knowledge or ensure that all staff consistently fulfil their roles and responsibilities to provide informed and safe care to children accessing the service. This reduces the quality and consistency of care children receive.

Poor performance and failure to follow policies and procedures are not addressed promptly. This leads to drift and a lack of accountability across the staff team.

Staff are expected to deliver workshops despite not being competent or up to date in these areas. Leaders and managers do not ensure that staff have the necessary skills before assigning these responsibilities. This reduces the effectiveness of staff development and competency.

The independent person offers an additional layer of scrutiny and understands the purpose and aims of the service. Managers' and leaders' own quality of care review provides an oversight of the service. However, monitoring systems, development and learning outcomes have not been embedded into practice.

The requirement made at the last inspection under Regulation 11, the positive relationships standard, has been met. All other requirements have been restated.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; protect and promote each child's welfare; provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background; provide to children personal items that are appropriate for their age and understanding. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(iv)(viii)) This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	20 September 2026
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—	20 September 2026

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 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; 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)(b)(d)) This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	
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; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on—	20 September 2026

research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1) (a)(b)(2)(a)(c)(f)(g)(i)(h)) This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that each child’s relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14 (1)(a) (2)(c)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that they have access to children’s care plans following each review to ensure that each child’s relevant care plan is followed. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	20 September 2026

Recommendation

- The registered person must have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’. Page 61, paragraph 13.2)

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: SC424089

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Action for Children Services Ltd

Registered provider address: Action for Children, 3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road,
WATFORD WD18 8AG

Responsible individual: Samantha Oliver

Registered manager: Charlotte Rogers

Inspector

Jill Sephton-Wright, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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