

SC426172

Registered provider: Action for Children

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This service is run by a large charitable organisation. The home provides short breaks for up to six children with learning and/or physical disabilities.

The manager registered with Ofsted in February 2015.

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 14 December 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. This report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 December 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: 30 July 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/07/2019	Full	Good
16/01/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
18/10/2018	Full	Good
05/12/2017	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The children make good progress because of the experiences that they have during their short breaks. The children have developed secure, positive relationships with dedicated staff who fully understand their individual needs.

Staff know the children's communication needs. Children's communication passports and placement plans ensure that new staff know each child's preferred method of communication. This supports children to feel safe and settled during their stay.

Staff help children to express their wishes and feelings. Children are consulted about activities and menus and, more recently, how the bedrooms were to be decorated. The staff put the outcomes of children's consultations on a 'you said we did board'. This shows children that staff have listened to and acted on their views.

The staff want children to understand how they are progressing and the importance of everyone celebrating their achievements. Staff regularly give certificates to children for doing something well during their stay. When children reach a target, a certificate is placed on the 'I have met my target board'. This shows children that staff value their achievements and reinforces positive behaviours.

The children enjoy a wide variety of activities at the home and in the community. Staff have produced a detailed activity pack giving information on the amenities available to children. This means that staff know in advance if the activity accommodates wheelchair users. A parent said that her child is always out doing something with the staff, and that it has had a positive impact on developing the child's social skills.

Staff have developed culture days. Children are supported to use their five senses to learn about different countries and cultures, including food, environment and music. Staff take photos of children enjoying the activities such as cooking, eating and drawing, and put these into a 'five senses' photo album.

Staff use individualised placement plans to guide and support them effectively to work with the children. A parent said that she has been involved in writing these plans with staff as her child is moving into the home. However, not all plans have been updated in line with the review date, and one child's plan contained another child's details.

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

The children are safe when staying at the home. A parent said that staff know and understand her child's needs and keep him safe.

Staff challenge difficult behaviours effectively using the children's individual behaviour plans in their communication passport. Staff consider the level of the child's understanding and ability to communicate. Staff record incidents and inform parents. Parents' views or comments are added to the incident report. Staff support parents to understand how they work with their children.

Risk assessments help staff to understand the children's risks at the home and in the community. However, not all risk assessments are reviewed and updated within the required timescales. This means that behaviours or risks that have changed may not be accurately reflected.

Staff have undertaken safeguarding training. They know how to report, record and follow up concerns. Social workers and parents said that the staff safeguard the children well.

Due to the high levels of staffing, children do not go missing from the home. For children who may be at risk of running away from staff during community activities, there is a clear risk assessment and extra staffing. Staff take a grab bag containing a photo and information of each child. Each child has a missing-from-home protocol. This ensures that, if police are contacted, they fully understand the children's risks and vulnerabilities.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is suitably experienced and has the relevant qualifications to manage the home.

Children are clearly at the centre of practice. The working partnership between the manager, professionals and parents is effective. Information is shared with relevant professionals, which enables everyone to work in the best interests of each child.

The manager uses monitoring systems to drive improvements at the home. She uses the recommendations from the independent person's report to support this and to continue to develop the home.

Staff receive regular supervision which supports them to work with the children and develop their practice. Regular staff meetings, including safeguarding scenarios and practice discussions, enhance staff's knowledge.

A parent said that the staff are like extended family and that she can call the home if she has any concerns. The parent said that communication is excellent, and she is updated after her child's visits.

Staff receive appropriate training to support them when working with the children. Staff hold or are in the process of achieving a relevant level 3 qualification. Specialist medical training is undertaken to ensure that children receive suitable care and are kept safe during their stay.

The manager has not sought information from external agencies to inform the location risk assessment. As a result, staff may not fully understand the potential risks for children in the community and how these can be reduced to keep them safe.

The manager has met the two recommendations set at the last inspection. The requirement will be 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, 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 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)(b)) In particular, to ensure that children's risk assessments and placement plans are kept updated. This requirement was made at the assurance visit and is restated.	10 January 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that they consult with services that have a statutory responsibility for safeguarding children in the neighbourhood where the home is located, i.e. children's services, the police, probation service providers and, if relevant, voluntary services that support victims of crime or young runaways. The purpose of consultation is, as far as reasonably practicable, to gather local intelligence on factors in a neighbourhood that may represent risks to children. (Children's homes regulation amendments 2014: Advice for children's homes providers on new duties under regulations that came into effect in January and April 2014, page 8, paragraph 1.19)
- The registered person should ensure that staff understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. In particular, to ensure that the information is related to the child the record is concerning and not another child. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: SC426172

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Action for Children

Registered provider address: 3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road, Watford WD18 8AG

Responsible individual: Kate Isham

Registered manager: Julie O'Connor

Inspector

Trish Palmer, Social Care Inspector

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