

SC432331

Registered provider: Action for Children

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A registered charity operates this home. It provides a residential short-breaks service for up to 8 children at any one time. One child lives at the home permanently. The children have learning disabilities and additional complex physical and health-related needs.

The manager registered with Ofsted in July 2020.

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 March 2026

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: 5 November 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/11/2024	Full	Good
30/01/2024	Full	Good
23/08/2022	Full	Good
08/07/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

There is one child living at the home permanently. Since the last inspection, 48 children have had short breaks, with 32 children in total accessing short breaks on a rotational basis. At the time of this inspection, there was one child at the home.

Staff develop positive relationships with children and know them well. There are warm and positive interactions between staff and the children. Staff take time to understand children's individual communication needs. One child was observed confidently making their needs known, with staff responding patiently and appropriately. Children's plans provide staff with clear information about how children communicate. The children are supported by adults who understand them and help them to feel comfortable during their stays.

Children are routinely given opportunities to share their wishes and feelings and make choices about their care. This includes choosing bedrooms, deciding on the items they would like available during their stay and selecting activities. Children's meetings provide further opportunities for children to share their views and suggest changes. Staff have added a 'you said, we did' board so that children can see how their views have been acted on. This helps children to feel valued and reassured that their views are taken seriously.

Children benefit from positive experiences. Parents said that their children have opportunities to take part in new activities that they may not otherwise experience such as overnight stays away from home and swimming. Parents said that their children are safe and happy during their stays. Staff support children to develop their independence according to their individual abilities. Staff help children to develop personal care skills. This supports children to prepare for greater independence and adulthood.

Children have personalised support plans which provide clear information about their behaviour and support needs. These plans include clear guidance for staff and are updated following observations or incidents. Each child has individual goals and outcomes which are tracked and reviewed. Leaders and managers have made changes to strengthen how children's progress and outcomes are captured. This helps to ensure that children receive support that reflects their individual needs and encourages their progress.

One child recently moved on from the home and experienced a positive ending, despite challenges presented by external circumstances. Leaders and managers advocated for the child to ensure that their needs were considered during the move. Staff helped to make sure that the child had the equipment to access facilities in their new home. Staff moved the child's belongings and ensured that their room was prepared so that they arrived to a comfortable and welcoming space. Staff have made attempts to remain in

contact with the child following the move. This thoughtful approach helped the child to experience a planned and supportive move from the home.

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

Staff know the children well and are skilled at helping them to de-escalate situations and manage behaviours safely. Behavioural incidents are managed calmly and in line with children's individual support plans. Managers maintain effective oversight of incidents and use this information to identify when changes are needed. It was identified a taxi company arriving earlier than expected was increasing anxiety for one child. This was changed. On another occasion, staff recognised that access to a second electronic device could help one child to regulate. Staff supported the family to explore funding for this. This reflective approach ensures that support strategies are adapted to meet children's individual needs, helping to reduce anxiety and prevent incidents from escalating.

Staff help children to develop their understanding of routines, expectations and how to keep safe. They use strategies that reflect children's communication needs including the use of social stories. Staff created a social story to help a child understand what would happen during their visit to the home. This was shared with the child's parents so it could also be used at the family home. The child's parents said that this has helped their child to feel less anxious and has supported more successful visits. Social stories support children to develop independence with personal care and to understand how to use electronic devices safely.

Physical restraints are used rarely and as a last resort to keep children safe. Debriefs take place with staff and children, in ways that are accessible and appropriate to children's individual needs. Managers review each incident to evaluate whether the intervention was necessary and proportionate. This oversight helps to ensure that the least restrictive approaches are used when supporting children.

Children have individual risk assessments which identify known hazards and outline the steps to reduce these. However, the quality of these assessments is inconsistent. One child had an incomplete assessment despite attending the services for some time.

Safeguarding concerns about staff practice are thoroughly investigated. However, on 2 occasions staff did not report concerns about a colleague's practice in a timely manner. This delay meant that managers were not immediately aware of the concerns and therefore were unable to respond as quickly as they should. This has the potential to place children at risk.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is led by an experienced and qualified manager who has been in post for over five years. The manager has clear oversight of the home and knows the children well. Staff spoke positively about the leadership and said that they feel well supported in their roles. The manager is ambitious for the children and sets out clear expectations for staff.

When concerns about staff practice are raised, leaders and managers respond appropriately. Medication errors or practice concerns are reviewed and investigated. When necessary, action is taken to address issues, including providing further guidance, training or reviewing staffing arrangements. This helps to ensure that staff provide safe and consistent care.

Staff, including agency staff receive regular supervision session in line with the organisation's policies. These sessions provide opportunities for staff to reflect on their practice, share concerns and receive feedback from managers. Supervision sessions are used to address any identified practice issues and identify further training needs.

The manager advocates effectively on behalf of children and challenges other professionals when necessary. This has included raising concerns with external professionals to improve communication and ensure staff are involved in important meetings about children. The manager has also made complaints on behalf of children. This helps to ensure that children's needs and views are represented and that they receive the support they require.

Leaders and managers have developed effective working relationships with parents and professionals. Parents spoke positively about the support provided by the service and value the good communication. External professionals said that the service is flexible and creative in meeting the needs of individual children. One professional said that the information provided by the manager helps them to understand children's needs and inform their plans. This collaborative approach helps to ensure that children receive coordinated support from the professionals involved in their care.

Leaders and managers have routinely reviewed and updated the home's statement of purpose. However, these updated versions have not been shared with Ofsted. This means that Ofsted does not currently have the most up-to-date information about how the home operates, or the care provided by staff.

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 are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(vi)(vii)) In particular, ensure that staff implement the home's safeguarding policy and procedure and report safeguarding concerns promptly. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	12 March 2026

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. Where there are safeguarding concerns for a child, their placement plan, agreed between the home and their placing authority, must include details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day-to-day basis. The quality and detail of these plans should be consistent for all children accessing the service. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- The registered person should ensure that the Statement of Purpose is kept under review. Homes are required to develop and keep under review a "Statement of Purpose" (regulation 16 and schedule 1). The registered person should notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.5)

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: SC432331

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Action for Children

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

Responsible individual: Emily Evans

Registered manager: Nicola Gubbins

Inspector

Emilja Myers, Social Care Inspector

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