

SC489212

Registered provider: MacIntyre Academies

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is run by a not-for-profit company in partnership with the local authority. The home provides care for children and young people with disabilities and a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. The home provides residential care and short breaks arrangements.

There were four children living at the home at the time of the inspection. The short breaks service was not operating, as the provider has closed this temporarily.

A school operates on the same site as this children's home. The inspector only inspected the social care provision on this site.

There has been no registered manager in post since August 2024.

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 September 2024

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: 6 June 2023

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
06/06/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
02/08/2022	Full	Good
16/05/2022	Full	Inadequate
21/09/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

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

The experiences and progress of all children at this home have been affected by shortfalls in help and protection and leadership and management.

Children have made progress. One parent reports that their child is doing 'amazingly well'. Staff have helped their child to develop independence skills. The child can use the bus and go shopping with staff's support. Staff capture children's progress in frequent reviews, which are shared with families and professionals.

Staff know the children well. High levels of attentive staff help children build good relationships with other children. Staff have a good understanding of the children's routines and needs. One parent said their child is always greeted warmly by staff and their child is always pleased to see them.

Children attend the specialist school on site. One child was out of school for a year and is now in school each day. Children enjoy school, and in the mornings are keen to go to school for the day. Specialist advice and resources are not yet shared routinely between home and school staff to ensure children have consistent care and support. Leaders have plans to develop this.

Children have enjoyable experiences. They can access a range of play equipment in the home's gardens, including a sensory garden, swings and the school grounds. Children have received visits from a home petting zoo and an interactive science experience. Some children go home at the weekends. Staff provide support and guidance to parents to promote this quality time between children and their families.

Staff work well to prepare young people to move on from the home. Two young people have moved on from the home since the last inspection. They were supported with communication aids and clear plans for moving on. Young people who have moved on have settled well into their new homes.

Staff help children make day-to-day choices. Children can choose their activities and have been involved in redecorating their bedrooms. Children's bedrooms reflect their individual interests, and they enjoy their newly decorated rooms. Staff use wristbands and visual prompts to help children make choices. Staff do not always use specific communication aids with children that are outlined in children's plans to support their communication needs.

The physical environment is not homely. The bathrooms have mould in them and smell damp. The children's toilets do not have toilet seats for children to sit comfortably on. There are light switches high up on the outside of the children's bedrooms, and the children's bedroom doors are numbered. This gives an institutional feel to the home.

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

Staff understand the vulnerabilities of the children. Risks are reduced by high levels of supervision and support. The assessment of risks is not always formally reviewed and documented by staff. There is no impact on the safety of children, as staff are aware of the risks for them.

Leaders manage allegations well. They carry out investigations fairly and promptly. Concerns are shared with families, social workers and the local authority designated officer. Low-level practice concerns are addressed, and lessons are learned from incidents.

Staff are well trained in safeguarding and know how to raise safeguarding concerns. There are systems in place for staff to raise concerns with senior staff. Staff are confident that managers take their concerns seriously.

Staff understand that children's behaviour is a form of communication. Staff know the children well. They understand children's sensitivities and reasons for being distressed. They respond to children promptly and look for changes in the child's body language. Physical intervention is rarely used. When it has been used, children are spoken with afterwards and records are clear about its use.

Medication systems have been improved. There is clear organisation of medications and records are well kept. Staff know what to do if there is an error in medication administration and recording. Managers have introduced new systems to identify errors. Staff are undergoing further training to increase the number of staff who can administer medications.

One young person has CCTV installed in their bedroom. This is not currently being used as it is broken. The written rationale for its use has not been reviewed for 18 months and there are no consents for its use. The young person does not like the monitoring. They are not subject to any deprivation of liberty order allowing the use of such invasive monitoring.

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

There is no registered manager. An interim manager is managing the home on a day-to-day basis with a new, experienced responsible individual. They are providing stability to the staff and have made a positive impact to the leadership of the home. Staff report that there has been a noticeable positive change, and that the culture of the home is improving.

Leaders have identified areas of development and have plans in place to improve the quality of care. There have been significant challenges with staffing sufficiency. To

reduce the impact of this on the children, the short breaks service has been temporarily closed.

Staff report that they are now well supported. They describe the managers as being approachable and modelling good practice to staff. The managers are involved in the children's care and work alongside staff. New staff are welcomed to the home and are provided with a clear structure for their induction. Staff feel well supported by each other.

Parents report that communication has improved tremendously with the arrival of the new managers. Staff communicate with parents over the phone and through apps. Parents are involved in their child's care, and managers respond to complaints raised quickly.

The day-to-day care is sometimes organised by inexperienced staff members. Managers are supporting and providing guidance to these staff. Shift planners have also been introduced to help organise the shifts. The lack of experienced staff in the home has reduced the ability for the managers to make changes at pace.

Staff have not had regular supervision in line with the home's policies. Most staff have had one or two supervisions this year. The quality of these supervisions has improved significantly with the new manager in post.

Two children have moved into the home. The leaders worked well with partner agencies to understand the children's needs and share information. Leaders review the children's care needs with school to ensure there is consistency. There are clear plans for children moving into the home to build relationships with staff. However, there was no formal assessment of one child's needs or the impact on other children living in the home. The impact of this was not significant as the child has settled in well.

Staff are not adequately trained. Very few staff have completed the required qualification, with three staff not completing this within the required time frame. Not enough staff are first-aid trained to ensure that there is always a first-aid trained staff member in the home. Managers have now organised first-aid training for all staff. Staff have not been trained in the specific needs of the children, such as autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Plans for children's care are not kept up to date. One child's behaviour support plan had not been reviewed and was inaccurate. One child has significant gaps in their care plan, including basic care routines and information about their culture. Key information has been shared verbally between staff, which has reduced the impact on children.

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— provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background; ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child; and enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(iv)(c)(i)(ii)) In particular, ensure that the registered person improves the home environment. In particular, ensure that staff create personalised care plans that contain the child's routines and support needs and reflect the child's background.	30 September 2024
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—	30 September 2024

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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)) In particular, ensure that staff regularly review risks for children and include these in children’s plans. This requirement is repeated from the previous inspection.	
The registered person must ensure that the employment of any person on a temporary basis at the children’s home does not prevent children from receiving such continuity of care as is reasonable to meet their needs. The registered person must ensure that— at all times, at least one person on duty at the home has a suitable first aid qualification. (Regulation 31 (1) (2)(a)) In particular, there should be enough first-aid trained staff to ensure there is at least one person on duty at the home with a first-aid qualification.	30 September 2024
The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if— the child’s placing authority consents in writing to the monitoring or surveillance; so far as reasonably practicable in the light of the child’s age and understanding, the child is informed in advance of the intention to do the monitoring or surveillance; and the monitoring or surveillance is no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child’s need for privacy. (Regulation 24 (1)(b)(c)(d)) In particular, ensure that when devices are used for monitoring or surveillance of children and young people consents are obtained and there are clear plans of care which are reviewed often. These plans should be lawful in line with the young person’s plans.	30 September 2024

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 a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma. (Regulation 32 (1)(3) 4(a)(b)) In particular, ensure that staff have the relevant qualification for their role and are supported to complete this in the required timescales.	30 September 2024
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff receive regular supervision in line with the home's policy. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- The registered person should ensure that staff have the skills and resources to ensure communication aids and equipment are used with children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.6)
- The registered person should consider the impact of a new child on the existing group of children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)
- The registered person should have a workforce plan in place which is regularly reviewed and kept up to date. This should include staff receiving training specific to the children's specific needs and conditions. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)
- The registered person should ensure that the staff member in a supervisory role such as 'shift leader' has substantial relevant experience of working in a children's home and has completed their induction. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.21)

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: SC489212

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: MacIntyre Academies

Registered provider address: Seebeck House, 1 Seebeck Place, Knowlhill, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK5 8FR

Responsible individual: Jennifer Marshall

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Mark Dawkins, Social Care Inspector

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