

1226969

Registered provider: Action For Children

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This registered charity-operated children's home provides care and accommodation for up to four children who have learning disabilities and/or physical disabilities.

Inspection dates: 11 to 12 May 2017

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: 16 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because

- The staff work in close partnership with families and other professionals to meet the children's complex needs well.
- The home is well managed. The new manager has a clear understanding of the

home's strengths and areas for development.

- Good-quality care planning means that staff understand the children's specific health needs.
- There are excellent contact arrangements and support provided to the children's families and carers.
- The children's thoughts, wishes and feelings are constantly sought, however complex their needs.

The children's home's areas for development

- Not all staff have completed the diploma level 3 training.
- The manager has updated the home's statement of purpose. However, the revised statement has not been submitted to Ofsted.
- The main bathroom requires improvement to further enhance the accommodation and match the recent improvements made elsewhere in the home.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
25/04/2016	Full	Requires improvement

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 registered person must keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. Regulation 16(3)(a)(b)	09/06/2017
The registered person must ensure that an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification, 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, by the relevant date. (Regulation 32(4)(a)(b)(5)(a)(b))	28/07/2017

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendation:

- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. Children's homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene, etc.); however, in doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9).
This is in regard to the main bathroom in the home.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The home provides long-term residential care and shared care for children who have physical and/or learning disabilities. The children have associated complex needs and many children are non-verbal. Various tools and approaches are used to communicate, such as pictorial systems, sign language, gestures, single words and sounds. Due to the

complexities of the children, it is vital that staff understand their individual styles of communication. Professionals and parents say that the home works in full partnership with them. Parents and professionals guide staff on preferred methods of communication, which result in the children quickly settling at the home and feeling secure.

A new registered manager has taken up post since the last inspection. She has worked hard to ensure that the children receive a high level of consistent and nurturing care. Agency staff are no longer used. While there are still several staff vacancies, the existing staff work any gaps on the rota. This means that the children develop strong bonds with consistent staff. A parent said, 'He can say his key worker's name, he says it all the while. He can't wait to go there.'

All of the children attend education provisions that cater for their specific learning needs. The home communicates daily with the schools by completing a school diary, which includes any events overnight, such as poor sleeping. This ensures that all professionals providing care are aware of any issues that may impact on the child's mood for the day. A teacher said, 'Daily communication is always good. Staff are proactive in their approach. The key worker chose to visit the school. Definite progress has been achieved [by the child] in both behaviour and presentation.' Improvements in the child's behaviour have helped to increase their progress in their education.

One of the children has a complex physical health need which required staff to undertake specific training to provide safe care. The home benefits from a registered nurse visiting regularly. The nurse ensured that all of the staff were able to demonstrate that they had gained the skills required prior to the child's admittance. The staff understand the importance of continuing professional development to enable them to meet the health needs of the children. The nurse said, 'The staff have all responded very well and completed their training promptly. They are a very, very committed team. They all know what action to take and protocols to follow in emergency situations.'

The manager and staff celebrate the children's achievements. There is a celebration wall in the home displaying school certificates and photographs of the children enjoying activities, such as messy play and baking cakes. The children are currently enjoying growing their own sunflowers for a competition taking place with the provider's sister homes. This helps the children to build on their social skills and encourages them to engage with other children. A parent said, 'I can see how much she [child] has developed. She has fun and is progressing due to all the opportunities she has in the community. She is now able to play and interact with her peers; something I didn't think would be possible.' The children have their own book containing photographs of these special moments to share with their families and keep as memorabilia.

The staff ensure that contact arrangements with parents and carers take place by supporting parents who require assistance. This includes providing transport and/or accompanying the child and carer on contact in the community. A parent said, 'The staff are lovely. They are very supportive and they help make things happen.' Another parent said, 'I am able to spend lovely quality time with her [child] now, the staff support this

and encourage contact.' All parents felt that the high quality of care provided had enabled their children's behaviours to settle and improve.

The home works closely with families and professionals to ensure that children have well-planned transitions. The manager completes an assessment of the child's individual needs and considers any impact on existing children prior to admission. The child visits the home several times to familiarise themselves with staff and other children. A social worker said, 'Transitions go well due to the good preparations, and progress is quickly made.' The children are actively encouraged to learn independence skills to help them with their transitions to adulthood. A parent said, 'My child has come on leaps and bounds since being at the home. She has even learned how to make choices regarding what clothes to wear.'

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

The children in this home do not recognise dangers. They require monitoring and supervision to a high level to ensure their safety. The children benefit from receiving consistent routines and staff regularly reviewing any possible risks. The manager has made improvements to the case records in the home. She monitors events and updates the risk assessments and behaviour management plans accordingly. These records guide staff in how to manage individual risks effectively and ensure that the team works in a consistent manner.

Parents report that they know their children feel safe and happy by watching their interactions with the staff. During this inspection, the trusting relationships that the children have developed with staff were evident. The children like to sit or stand close by to staff. On arrival from school, the children smile broadly and quickly settle into enjoying activity time. A parent commented, 'It's really lovely to see her [child] interact with the staff so well. She is so well looked after. She feels safe at the home and it is a safe environment.'

An independent advocate visits the children every month. The children are able to make their feelings known through body language, facial expressions and words. The home has ensured that the children have an opportunity to make a complaint through an independent person.

At the last inspection, a recommendation was made to improve the record keeping of physical interventions to show a clear overview of the incident. The manager has met this recommendation by working closely with the independent visitor. Together, they have set up a comprehensive system which clearly shows any patterns. This helps staff to identify alternative strategies to prevent recurrence and has led to a reduction in the number of physical interventions.

Prior to admission, one of the children displayed high levels of self-harming behaviour, such as biting and hitting their head. All of the staff have received specific training and used the techniques when the child displays this behaviour. This intervention initially led

to a decrease and has subsequently led to no incidents of self-harming occurring for some time.

The home has effective links with social workers and the local designated officer. All staff have received mandatory safeguarding training. Staff spoken with have a clear understanding of the procedures to follow and recognise that they have a duty to safeguard children. The provider completes robust recruitment checks and no staff commence work at the home until their suitability has been verified.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The newly registered manager has a number of years' experience in this sector and is enrolled on the level 5 diploma. The manager feels well supported by the provider and receives regular, good-quality supervision. The manager has a clear vision for the home and provides good-quality leadership. There have been significant changes in the staff team, but the manager has been able to achieve consistency for the children throughout. This has been made possible by careful shift planning to ensure that every shift includes an experienced staff member who the children know well.

The home benefits from receiving well-considered reports from the independent visitor that give clear direction and suggest areas requiring improvements. The manager reports that she and the independent visitor work well together to ensure that the children receive a high-quality service and that the service development is continuous.

Regularly held staff meetings are structured and informative. The staff use this time to discuss the children, the progress that the children make, and to monitor their own interactions. This ensures that the children continue to receive a consistent response. Staff supervision is of good quality, with discussions in relation to values, accountability, personal development and training needs. This means that staff are well equipped to care for the children safely.

The staff team is committed to providing high-quality care and feel very well supported by the manager. A staff member said, 'I have never met a better manager. She has brought the team together and gives so much of herself to the team and the children.' Another said, 'The changes have been incredible since she started. She really knows how to get the best out of people.'

New staff receive a structured induction and all of the staff have completed the mandatory training. All eligible staff are enrolled on the level 3 diploma. The requirement set at the last inspection is restated due to this inspection taking place prior to the due completion date.

The manager oversees, monitors and regularly updates the comprehensive care plans and behaviour and risk management plans. The staff work closely with other professionals and they take action to address concerns quickly.

The home's objective is to provide good-quality care and to support the children to achieve their full potential. The manager and staff are passionate about improving outcomes for the children and the home is achieving its stated objective. All parents and professionals agree that the home provides good-quality care and that the children have made significant progress.

The manager has updated the home's statement of purpose to reflect changes in practice and staffing. However, this version has not been submitted to Ofsted as required by regulation.

The home provides a safe environment for the children. The staff team has made recent improvements to the home and it is comfortable and homely. All of the children have personalised bedrooms and there has been improvement work undertaken in the front garden. The manager has held fundraising events to help to achieve improvements, and a sensory garden is the next project planned. However, a recommendation is raised for improvements to be made to the main bathroom of the home, which is institutional and tired in appearance in comparison to the rest of the home.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: 1226969

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Action For Children

Registered provider address: Action For Children, 3 The Boulevard, Watford WD18 8AG

Responsible individual: Stephen Sipple

Registered manager: Joy Bradley

Inspector

Lynne Drage, social care inspector

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