

1249259

Registered provider: Priory Education Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is privately owned and run by a specialist education service provider. It is registered to care for up to four children who have learning disabilities, and focuses on caring for young people who have complex needs that may include autistic spectrum disorder and associated difficulties.

The home is located within the provider's school campus. The current residents attend the school.

Inspection dates: 1 to 2 November 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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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	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: This is the home's first inspection since it was registered on 3 March 2017.

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None.

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- Children make excellent progress in their education, social skills and independence skills.
- Children's safety and well-being are at the centre of the staff's practice.
- Managers and the staff are committed to ensuring that the children receive care of the highest possible standard.
- The manager has an excellent oversight of the service and uses quality assurance systems effectively to continuously improve the quality of care.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Recordings of sanctions and physical interventions do not contain sufficient explanation of the areas that they are required by regulation to include.
- Managers do not complete impact risk assessments or evidence their decision-making on the compatibility of the children living together.
- Recruitment checks are not completed in line with regulation.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- The policy on protection of children from abuse and neglect should include arrangements to counter risks of self-harm and suicide. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 44, paragraph 9.19)
- The registered persons should demonstrate how staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5) In particular, staff should update risk management strategies after incidents.
- Records of restraint must be kept and should enable the registered person and staff to review the use of control, discipline and restraint to identify effective practice and respond promptly where any issues or trends of concern emerge. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59) In particular, ensure that records of sanctions and physical interventions provide sufficient explanation of all areas required by the regulation.
- When considering new placements, the registered manager should fully consider the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4) In particular, the registered manager should evidence their judgement of compatibility between the children.
- As set out in regulations 31-33, the registered person is responsible for maintaining good employment practice. They must ensure that recruitment, supervision and performance management of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1) In particular, ensure that recruitment checks are carried out in line with regulation.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Exceptionally nurturing and supportive relationships with the staff ensure that the children feel safe and secure, providing them with a solid foundation to grow and develop. Interactions between the children and the staff are extremely warm and fun. The staff use play effectively to engage the children and to build strong relationships. Consequently, the children seek out the staff, enjoy their company and respond to their support and guidance, enabling the children to progress in all aspects of their lives.

Staff's focus on enabling the children to communicate their views, wishes and feelings is exemplary. Each child has a 'communication dictionary', which provides comprehensive detail on the children's communication needs. Consequently, the staff are highly adept at understanding the children's cues for indicating their wants and needs when they are unable to communicate verbally. The staff are extremely patient and concentrate on providing the best environment to enable the children to communicate with the staff.

Supportive and responsive interactions provide comfort and reassurance to the children. The staff use Makaton and children's other preferred communication methods exceptionally well to engage with the children and to provide comfort and reassurance when necessary. As a result, the children are relaxed around, and feel valued by, staff.

Excellent role modelling enables the children to learn to interact with others appropriately. Consistent support and guidance from the staff has helped the children to begin to trust adults, understand social expectations and engage well with others. As a result, the children make significant progress in their social skills. For example, one child who previously found it difficult to form attachments with males now benefits from very positive relationships with the male members of staff. Another child, who previously became extremely distressed and violent when attending medical appointments, now engages calmly with other professionals, allowing for a thorough assessment of their health.

Through well-planned programmes, the children are making excellent progress in developing their daily living skills. Staff use a staged approach to support the children to accomplish their goals through achievable steps. Children's skills and abilities are regularly assessed to ensure that the staff support the children to continually develop and maximise their independence. These strategies have been extremely successful in supporting the children to take more responsibility for themselves. For example, a child who previously relied on continence aids no longer requires them during the day.

Every achievement, no matter how small, is celebrated and rewarded by the staff. Staff are compiling a life-story book for each child containing pictures of their accomplishments. The staff provide certificates as a reward for each child's endeavours. As a result, the children gain in confidence and want to achieve further.

Countless fun activities and opportunities to try new things are on offer. Staff nurture the children's personalities and are extremely enthusiastic and dedicated to ensuring that the children have opportunities to follow their interests. At the request of a child to attend a disco, the manager went above and beyond to organise such an event in the local community, which the children from this home and others can attend. As a result, the children are able to develop new friendships and extend their social experiences.

Children are making fantastic strides in their education. All of the children have superb attendance, which is a significant achievement for those children who previously would not engage in education. Communication between the staff and education colleagues is extremely effective and ensures that the children receive consistent support to enable them to reach their potential.

A comprehensive understanding of each child, combined with an extremely compassionate and empathetic approach by the staff, enables the staff to support the children effectively to express their emotions more positively. Staff are attuned to the children's needs and understand that a child's behaviour is a method of communicating how they are feeling. Staff are adept at identifying the causes of a child's distress and take swift action to remove the source of their upset or to provide comfort and distraction, enabling the child to calm.

Staff employ creative approaches to encourage the children to reflect on their behaviours and finds ways of telling the staff how they are feeling without having to resort to aggressive outbursts. For example, the staff have ensured that the children have easy access to symbols and picture exchange systems to communicate their emotions. Consequently, there has been a significant reduction in incidents for the children who previously displayed extremely violent and aggressive behaviours.

Children have a real voice in the running of the home. Children's views are highly valued by the staff and are obtained using a variety of methods, including individual and group work. Staff use social stories effectively; this aids the children's understanding and helps them to make decisions. Staff use creative strategies to engage the children; for example, they successfully arranged a treasure hunt to help the children to understand the risks in the local area. This also contributed to the home's location assessment. Such creative practice enables the children to participate in all aspects of home life.

Extremely positive feedback about the managers and the staff was received from both parents and professionals. They were highly complimentary about the support provided to the children to help them when they transition into the service. Effective placement planning and an individualised approach ensures that the children are only admitted to the home if the staff can meet their needs. Moves into the home are managed at the child's own pace.

Children living together are 'matched' extremely well. Consequently, the children are making friends, which improves their self-esteem. However, the manager does not complete an impact risk assessment to evidence his assessment of the compatibility of the children living together.

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

The safety and well-being of the children is at the very centre of the staff's and the manager's practice. Staff understand that the children in their care are extremely vulnerable and they ensure that safeguards are put in place to protect the children. As a result, the children feel safe and are kept safe.

Nurturing and supportive relationships between the children and the staff ensure that the children trust the staff and feel able to share their concerns. There has been only one complaint since the home was registered. Staff were responsive and took swift action to address the child's concern to the child's satisfaction.

High staffing levels reflect the complex needs of the children, provide continuity of care and ensure that the necessary supervision is in place to keep the children safe. Staff use creative strategies to engage the children in discussions and to provide education on topics such as stranger danger, bullying and e-safety. Consequently, the children are developing an understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

Staff have an excellent knowledge of why the children display particular behaviours. The staff understand challenging behaviour as communication and respond to it as such. They successfully interpret the things children say and do and, where appropriate, they distract or divert the children. Staff continuously praise positive behaviour and support the children to express their feelings safely. As a result, incidents that require the staff to intervene physically to keep the children safe have reduced significantly. However, some records of sanctions and physical interventions do not provide sufficient explanation on all the areas required by regulation. This could hinder the manager's monitoring of such incidents to improve practice.

One child has gone missing on one occasion since the home's registration. Staff responded appropriately to ensure that the child returned to the home safely. A thorough investigation was undertaken and lessons were learned to prevent future missing incidents. The rigour with which this investigation was undertaken demonstrates that safeguarding is at the forefront of the manager's practice.

Staff take their safeguarding responsibilities extremely seriously and report concerns to the appropriate authorities. Staff have effective relationships with partner agencies and work closely with them to promote the children's safety. A comprehensive safeguarding policy is in place. However, it does not sufficiently include the risk of self-harm and suicide as required by the guidance.

Risk management strategies inform the staff of the action they must take to keep the children safe. However, one child's risk assessment was not reviewed after an incident and therefore did not provide the staff with necessary information to prevent the incident from reoccurring.

Managers have not undertaken the required recruitment checks to a high standard. A full employment history is not always obtained and the reasons for prospective employees leaving their previous employment with vulnerable adults or children are not consistently verified.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager and his deputy demonstrate an extensive knowledge and understanding of the children they care for and lead a dedicated team that consistently prioritises the best interests of each child. The management team is highly aspirational and extremely ambitious for the children in its care. It leads by example and has successfully embedded a vibrant and caring culture where the children come first. Consequently, the children make excellent progress.

Exceptional partnership working ensures that the needs of each child are met to the highest possible standard. Managers and staff work proactively and positively with others, offering professional challenge or advice when necessary. Staff receive support from the organisation's therapy team to reflect on children's behaviours, including what children might be feeling and how staff can best support them. This ensures that the children receive care that continues to meet their changing needs.

Excellent communication with parents ensures that they are actively involved in the care planning for each child, that parents are kept up to date on children's progress and that they are able to celebrate their child's successes. For parents for whom English is not their first language, managers have supported them to establish links with other parents who share the same first language. This helps parents to establish much-needed networks of support.

Strong quality assurance mechanisms ensure that the children receive a high standard of care. The registered manager has an excellent knowledge of all aspects of his service. He uses feedback from a variety of sources to inform how the home can improve. Because of this, a rigorous and challenging development plan is in place to ensure that the home continues to develop.

Skilled and competent staff deliver high-quality care in line with the home's statement of purpose. Staff have undertaken a variety of training, including mandatory training in safeguarding, first aid and behaviour management. All staff who are required to have completed their diplomas have done so, and those who have not are in the process of doing so. The staff have the skills and knowledge to ensure that the children's needs are met.

Regular supervision supports the staff effectively to develop and improve their practice. The manager is in the process of embedding a new supervision tool to better evidence the link between these discussions and outcomes for the children.

The manager and staff demonstrate a firm commitment to continually improving their practice in order to achieve positive and safe outcomes for children.

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 differences 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 whom 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: 1249259

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Priory Education Services Limited

Registered provider address: Priory Education Services Limited, 80 Hammersmith Road, London W14 8UD

Responsible individual: Hannah Cox

Registered manager: James Sallows

Inspector

Melissa McMillan, social care inspector

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