

# 1226969

Registered provider: Action for Children

Interim 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 date:** 7 February 2018

**Judgement at last inspection:** good

**Date of last inspection:** 11 May 2017

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## **This inspection**

### **The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection**

This home was judged good at the last full inspection. At the interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has sustained effectiveness.

Since the last inspection, a new manager has taken up post. She is currently progressing her application to be registered with Ofsted. She has a good knowledge of the home, having worked there for several years deputising for the last manager. The manager is currently working towards a relevant level 5 qualification. Although there have been a number of recent management changes, the care provided to the children remains good, and they continue to have positive experiences.

The manager has met one of the two requirements that were made at the last inspection. She is making progress towards meeting the recommendation in relation to the decoration of the bathroom, which was under way during this interim inspection. As this is not yet complete, the recommendation is restated.

Most of the staff are undertaking or have completed a relevant level 3 qualification. New

staff are due to start the qualification imminently. Consequently, the core staff are continuing to progress professionally, which helps them to provide a good level of care to the children.

The statement of purpose is comprehensive and outlines the aims of the service. However, both the statement of purpose and the workforce development plan require updating, as they do not reflect the changes to the management structure. This requirement will be restated.

The staff engage well with parents, and communication is effective. One parent said, 'Communication is good. They [the staff] have been really flexible with my current work patterns so that I can see my child.' Parents and carers are happy with the level of care provided to their children. Another parent said, 'I am very happy with my child's care; it is excellent. He talks about it [the home] all of the time when he is at home, and he loves to go back. They [the staff] look after him and keep him safe.' The staff promote and support contact between the children and their families and carers. This helps the children to continue to have significant contact with their families and maintain positive relationships. Good communication with families and carers helps to formulate secure and consistent care plans for the children.

The children are settled at the home, having been in placement for a significant period. They are happy in their daily routines and activities. The staff support them to attend school and they liaise with education professionals regularly.

The children's health needs are monitored, and the staff support the children to access their health appointments. The staff administer medication effectively. The manager and deputy manager regularly oversee and audit medication processes to ensure that the appropriate steps are followed by the staff.

Identified targets help the children to make progress in developing their skills. One child is being supported with her transition to move onto an adult placement. The children are supported to undertake tasks on their own or with support, such as helping to prepare meals or tidying their room. The staff support the children to make their own choices as much as possible. An independent advocate visits the home regularly. These visits give the children opportunities to communicate with someone who is external to the home. This independent visitor has oversight of the children's progress and spends time with the children and talking to the staff and the manager about any presenting issues.

The staff support the children to engage in a number of activities such as swimming and walks. Recently, the children visited a production of 'Disney on Ice'. One social worker said, 'The staff take my child out as much as they are able to. She is well cared for, and the staff engage with her really well. They will seek out support from other agencies for advice when needed.' A parent said, 'He [my child] has the opportunity to do activities that he is not able to at home. It is building his confidence. It gives me peace of mind.'

Risk assessments and behaviour plans are up to date. The staff know the children well. They are familiar with the children's individual personalities and likes and dislikes.

Following incidents or concerns, the manager actively seeks assistance and advice from external professionals. This additional input helps the staff to understand the reasons for behaviours, providing them with strategies to minimise the recurrence of incidents.

There have been very few physical interventions since the last inspection. These are only used by trained staff when other techniques have been unsuccessful. Staff intervene to safeguard the children. The records of these incidents are clear and detailed, outlining whether there are consequent discussions with the children. However, several of the records are not dated or signed by the manager. This means that it is not clear whether the manager provides consistent oversight and evaluation of the records and incidents.

The manager uses a number of regular agency staff, as there are currently vacancies at the home. The manager continues to try to recruit, and one new staff member has recently been appointed. Many of the agency staff work across the cluster of homes and know the children well. However, the agency staff are not supervised by the acting manager. This means that they do not benefit from ongoing support at the home, and the manager is not able to monitor their performance effectively. The agency staff access in-house training and are invited to attend team meetings.

Agency staff are experienced and qualified; however, it could not be clarified on inspection whether all of the agency staff are qualified to a relevant level 3 qualification or equivalent. Due to the number and frequency of agency staff working at the home, this is significant, as the agency staff have contact with the children on a regular basis. The lack of clarity about the qualifications of agency staff means that the manager cannot be sure that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to work with the children. Although the manager plans to meet with the agency and make changes to supervision arrangements, these plans have not yet been implemented.

The external monitoring is comprehensive and provides clear actions that the manager addresses in a timely manner. The internal monitoring provides a clear oversight of the reporting period but does not include the views from placing authorities. This lack of information means that it is not clear how the placing authorities are contributing to the ongoing development of the home.

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/05/2017	Full	Good
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))	9/3/2018
The registered person must ensure that all employees receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33(4)(a)(b))	9/3/2018
The registered person must keep the behaviour management policy under review and, where appropriate revise it. The registered person must ensure that within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ('the authorised person') has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35(3)(b)(i)(ii)(c))	9/3/2018
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ('a quality of care review') at least once every 6 months. The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45(1)(5))	9/3/2018

### Recommendations

- 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 relates to the decor in the main bathroom.

- All staff in a care role, including external agency or bank staff, must have the qualification in regulation 32(4) within the relevant timescale listed in regulation 32(5). The registered person may extend the period if the member of staff has not worked in the role for a prolonged period, such as sick leave or maternity leave, or if it is not reasonable to expect the member of staff to complete in this timescale due to the nature of the hours they work. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.12)

## **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.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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, Ascot Road, Watford WD18 8AG

**Responsible individual:** Stephen Sipple

**Registered manager:** Joy Bradley

## **Inspectors**

Debbie Young, social care inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2018