

# 1249259

Registered provider: Priory Education Services Limited

Interim inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This is a privately owned home which is operated by a large independent company. It is registered to accommodate up to four children who have learning disabilities, and focuses on caring for young people who have complex needs that may include autistic spectrum disorders and associated difficulties.

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

**Inspection date:** 26 March 2018

**Date of last inspection:** 1 November 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## 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 outstanding at the last full inspection. At the interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has improved effectiveness.

The manager and staff have continued to develop the service since the last inspection. Several rooms have been repainted, based on children's colour preferences. Each bedroom reflects the interests and choices of the occupant, making them very personal spaces.

A 'multipurpose' room has been designed which incorporates sensory equipment and other play items, such as a dressing-up box. This is proving popular with some children, and is a place they can go to calm down or enjoy quietness if the noise of others is becoming too much for them.

Staff have attempted to brighten up an otherwise unappealing backyard with tyre planters, and by colourfully painting the shed to the children's chosen design. The

children also have access to other play areas on the campus, including a trampoline that is in frequent use.

The manager has responded well to the recommendations made at the last inspection, providing input for staff to improve practice where required. For example, training has led to write-ups of the most recent physical interventions clearly describing the reasons staff used a measure and how they implemented it; this makes it easier for the manager to monitor practice. On the independent person's recommendation, the manager has added particular holds that best suit individual children to their positive handling plans. However, despite staff signing to say they have read them, this is yet to impact on practice, as staff did not recall the amendments had been made.

In addition, risk assessments show that staff amend these documents when incidents indicate that the team needs to be aware of new issues. Identification of risks has led to the team implementing strategies to help children become safer, such as the NSPCC's 'PANTS' programme regarding appropriate touch. As a result, a 'one-off incident' has not reoccurred.

Staff are clear about what they should do if a child goes missing or if they have safeguarding concerns – including if the designating safeguarding lead is implicated. The manager made changes during the inspection to the home's policy to make guidance for staff clearer in such circumstances.

The recruitment records of a recently appointed member of staff show that the provider has been scrupulous in checking previous employment history, contacting employers to confirm the dates the applicant was engaged with them and reasons for leaving, where relevant. Taken together, the practice of both the manager and the staff means the home is a safe and secure environment for vulnerable children.

The provider has adopted the manager's amended format of impact risk assessments that more readily captures the information gathered in order to inform decision-making. It is now a very comprehensive record.

However, placement plans do not always contain sufficient detail to make safeguarding issues clear, nor do they always specify the steps staff should take to ameliorate them. These issues are included in risk assessments and staff are obviously aware of them, which ensures that practice is good. Nevertheless, without a correlation between significant documents, it is possible that new staff will not respond appropriately or that inconsistent approaches will develop.

Placement plans lacked sufficient information about how staff should support children's cultural heritage. The manager could have given details about how the wishes of a particular parent had been followed, but these were not included in the plan and there was no information available for staff about how another side of the child's heritage should be promoted. It was not possible to determine children's contributions to placement plans, as there was nothing that specifically identified their views or referred to the understanding that staff evidently have of children's choices and preferences.

A children's guide ('welcome book') written in the form of a social story, explains life in

the home. This guide is given to children and staff read through it with them. Although it refers to children having a right to complain, it does not explain how this is done, nor how they can contact the Children's Commissioner.

Staff feel well supported by the manager and his deputy, who they regard as 'approachable and supportive', 'aware of everything going on' and 'willing to listen to your opinion'. The staff regard themselves as a strong team. They are focused on the needs of the children, and are willing to help each other out, particularly if they are in need of support with a particular child. More than one staff member commented on how quickly they were able to feel part of the group, and said that their contributions were welcomed.

The manager promotes the development of the staff extremely well. This is achieved through staff supervision and staff training, and through processes for learning from practice. For example, shift leaders debrief colleagues following an event, with the manager or deputy present to take an overview. This leads to staff learning from incidents effectively, and developing their skills and understanding, rather than expecting 'to be spoon-fed'.

Staff are proud to be working at the home and of the differences they have made to children's lives. Children have made significant progress in the time they have lived here, as shown by the assessments that are undertaken regularly from the point of entry to the current time. Targets are set for skills that children are aiming to develop, based on the assessments and the views of educational staff, parents and children themselves, and are an example of effective working partnerships. Staff write them so that aims are specific, measurable and achievable. Everyone invests in their attainment so that when a goal is reached, the whole team celebrates and the child is given a certificate and a special reward.

Children have made substantial progress with toileting, communicating (verbally and using symbols) and reducing self-harm, particularly. The manager's analysis of behaviour has also led to significant improvements: he identified that most of one child's incidents occurred at weekends when time was less structured. Planning more activities has resulted in there being no need to intervene physically with him for several months.

Staff take pleasure in enhancing children's experiences by engaging with them in individual interests or as a group together. A striking example is devising treasure/egg hunts using social stories, so that all the children, regardless of ability, are able to engage in a social activity, practice communication skills and enjoy themselves.

It is evident that children gain new skills, manage their difficulties and have positive relationships with each other and the staff in this home. They flourish in this environment.

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/01/2017	Full	Outstanding

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

### Recommendations

- Children should be able to maintain and develop their cultural or religious beliefs as far as practicable and where appropriate, through participation and instruction, and by observing religious requirements including dress and diet ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.22).  
In particular, placement plans should detail how children's heritage will be promoted.
- Staff should have the skills and confidence to communicate easily and understand the importance of listening to, involving and responding to the children they care for. Staff should understand that they have a responsibility to observe, notice and respond to children who are expressing their views, acknowledging that it is not the sole responsibility of the child to "tell". They should also understand how children might communicate their feelings through their behaviour, or non-verbally, especially where the child has a disability which does not allow them to communicate as others might ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.10).  
In particular, staff should record children's views, ascertained through observation or communication, in relevant plans.
- The children's guide should to help children to understand:
  - what the day-to-day routines of the home are ('what happens in the home')
  - the Statement of Purpose of the home (the care they can expect to receive while living there);
  - how to make a complaint in line with the home's complaints procedure;
  - how they can access advocacy support or independent advocacy if eligible; and
  - how to contact the Office of the Children's Commissioner.
 ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 24 paragraph 4.22)
- Staff should 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. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42 paragraph 9.5)

## 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:** 1249259

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Priory Education Services Limited

**Registered provider address:** Priory Group, 80 Hammersmith Road, London, W14 8UD

**Responsible individual:** Hannah Cox

**Registered manager:** James Sallows

## Inspector

Chris Peel, social care inspector

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