

SC069336

Registered provider: Prior's Court Foundation

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and run by a charitable organisation. It provides care and accommodation for up to 67 children who have autism spectrum disorder and associated conditions in a number of houses. There is an Ofsted registered school within the extensive grounds where the home is set.

The manager was registered with Ofsted in April 2011.

Inspection dates: 25 to 26 June 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 9 October 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/10/2018	Full	Good
22/11/2017	Full	Good
07/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
07/07/2016	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children make good progress through their strong relationships with staff. Inspectors noted a greater confidence in staff and a positive atmosphere across the houses. Relationships within the groups of children appear calmer and more harmonious, resulting in a settled living environment. Staff displayed a genuine warmth towards the children and managed their anxieties extremely well. Staff's patience is a particular strength.

Parents, social workers and other professionals were consistently positive about the home. One parent said her son's 'body language is that he is always happy', and that 'the staff really just get him and understand him well'. Across the house there is strong consideration of children's individual identity and culture. Examples include meals out to a Polish restaurant with a Polish member of staff, and the use of bilingual PECS for communication. Detailed plans break down children's goals into achievable steps. Progress includes children being able to have a haircut, shave and tolerate those they live with. Two social workers were highly complimentary about the quality of the individualised care they had seen.

Children were actively occupied in various activities across the houses and grounds, as well as in the community. The use of communication systems was much more prevalent than previously seen, and children were actively making choices or understanding what was expected of them. However, the use of these communication tools is still lacking in the communal dining room.

The staff, in conjunction with the speech and language therapists, have access to a wealth of resources to support the personal development and knowledge of children who have learning disabilities around sex, sexuality and relationships. However, the care planning documents often lack detail around sexual health or how to support a child to explore their sexual identity.

Staff encourage children to lead healthy lifestyles and to understand what this means for them. Excellent joint working with nursing and therapy teams ensures that children have their physical and emotional well-being needs met. Staff have an annual review of their knowledge, skills and competencies relating to managing and administering medicines. However, protocols for the support of children are undated so it is unclear how up-to-date the information is. Positive examples of joint working across the houses and medical team include children's weight loss or gain, as needed, and improved diets and exercise. It was noted that medication rooms were too hot to safely store medication or to meet a specific child's health needs. This was rectified during the inspection.

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

Children's actions and demeanour show that they feel safe and confident in their environment. The safeguarding team is present across the houses. Staff say they are confident in how to report any safeguarding or child protection concerns they may have, and how to seek support and guidance from the safeguarding team.

Staff feel there is an open culture and they are able to say if they are finding something difficult or if it is not working well. The safeguarding processes have clear oversight by the safeguarding team and senior leaders. Appropriate action is taken when concerns have been raised. Records of investigations are detailed and clear.

The monitoring of bruising and unexplained injuries is diligent, in that all marks are recorded onto body maps. However, the system relies on staff reporting the injuries or bruises to the safeguarding team. The records do not indicate this decision-making. There is no link to previous injuries or marks to demonstrate whether staff are considering the trends of bruising for a particular child. This is a missed opportunity to ensure a thorough and analytical approach.

Staff are confident in recognising that children's behaviour is a form of communication. There is an increased understanding of what children are communicating, and much stronger oversight of incidents and staff responses to these. The overall number of incidents has reduced. There is greater use of de-escalation, with staff presenting as being more in control of situations and their own emotions and anxieties around children's behaviours that may challenge. The use of physical interventions is monitored and evaluated. Managers reflect with staff about how incidents could have been responded to differently, and about planning for responses for the child in the future.

There has been a significant improvement in most of the houses' decor and maintenance. Their appearance is more homely and damage is swiftly repaired. However, this was noted to still be an issue in some of the houses and was dependent on the team in each house. Managers acknowledged the need for better oversight in this area.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Staff say they are well supported and can access senior staff at all times. They have specialist training in order to meet the needs of the children they care for. The quality of supervision is variable dependent on the supervisor. Supervisors across the houses are not consistently supportive or reflective. There are still some staff who have not achieved a level 3 qualification within the prescribed timescales. Managers are providing various learning opportunities and time during working hours to ensure that these staff complete their qualification. There are also a low number of agency staff who hold a relevant level 3 qualification.

Managers are seeking to continually improve the quality of the care for children and the systems used across the organisation. They are mindful not to change too many things too often. It is clear that the leaders and managers have reflected on the judgements and shortfalls noted at the last inspection and have considered these in their planning and progression of the service.

Complaints are generally responded to well and in a timely manner. There is concern though that parents have had to raise issues that should be picked up as a matter of course through day-to-day processes and attention in the home. Gaps in monitoring have led to the majority of the inconsistencies noted across the houses. Leaders and managers have recognised this issue and have contracted a new independent visitor in line with regulation 44 to provide a fresh approach to monthly monitoring.

Recruitment drives have been successful in recruiting suitable staff to the home. The vacancy rate has reduced from 33.5% to 21.5%. Managers have looked at staff retention and increased the length of staff induction to ensure that they both retain staff, and that these staff have the necessary skills. Leaders and managers are investing in the agency staff they regularly use. They have worked hard to ensure that the agency staff are well trained and have the skills to work with the children. Leaders have used a tendering process to review the staffing agencies used, resulting in a decision to no longer use one particular agency. They remain committed to only using staff that are suitable to meet the children's needs.

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
<p>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—</p> <p>that staff have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm. (Regulation 12 (2)(a)(iii))</p> <p>This is specifically in relation to the recording and monitoring of unexplained injuries.</p>	16/08/2019
<p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (2)(h))</p>	16/08/2019
<p>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. The relevant date is in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care</p>	16/08/2019

role in a home. (Regulation 32 (4)(a)(b)(5)(a))	
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Recommendations

- Care [should be provided] which meets each child's needs and promotes their welfare, taking into account the child's gender, religion, ethnicity, cultural and linguistic background, sexual identity, mental health, any disability, their assessed needs, previous experiences and any relevant plans. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.2)
- The use of external agency staff can be a positive choice to complement the skills and experiences of the permanent workforce. Any external agency staff should meet the requirements in regulation 32(4) regarding mandatory qualifications and the registered person should consider their skills, qualifications and any induction necessary before they commence work in the home. The use of agency staff should be carefully monitored and reviewed to ensure children receive continuity of care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.16)
- The registered person should monitor and review the patterns and trends of turnover of staff, whether agency or directly employed, and be able to understand and, where possible, address any negative trends. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.19)
- The registered person must have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. Professionally qualified staff employed by the home, e.g. teachers or social workers, should be provided with relevant professional or clinical supervision by an appropriately qualified and experienced professional. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)

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: SC069336

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: Prior's Court Foundation

Responsible individual: Michael Robinson

Registered manager: Sarah Butcher

Inspectors:

Jennie Christopher, social care inspector

Emeline Evans, social care inspector

Amanda Harvey, social care inspector

Anne-Marie Davies, social care inspector

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