

1234621

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 run by a large national private organisation. The home provides care for up to five children who experience social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The registered manager post has been vacant since 21 July 2021.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 21 January 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 26 to 27 July 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 13 September 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/09/2018	Full	Good
10/08/2017	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
31/05/2017	Full	Good
23/11/2016	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

The home reopened in November 2020 following a period of voluntary closure. There were two children at the home at the time of the inspection. Since it reopened, three children have moved on from the home to more specialist provisions. These moves were an unexpected change of care plan for two children.

Children and staff have experienced unsettled and, at times, chaotic periods when staff lacked clear guidance on managing children's unsafe behaviour. There have been frequent changes to the staff team, with four new members of staff joining the home since January 2021 and the registered manager leaving her post after a period of sick leave. Despite this, a fourth child joined the home at a time when the relatively new staff team was without an appointed manager. As a result, children have not been provided with a sense of stability and have made variable progress with their development.

Structure and routines have improved more recently, with a high level of senior management support at the home and members of staff starting to feel more confident in setting boundaries for children.

Staff have supported most children to engage with education. One child did not attend any education placement, while at the home, due to her emotional well-being. Staff encouraged the child to take part in broader learning activities at the home, such as baking. However, this meant that the child was without any formal education provision for six months in the last year of her schooling, affecting her academic progress and future opportunities for training and employment. One child has been supported to attend the same school that she was attending before moving to the home. This has provided her with a good level of continuity in education, and in the relationships that she had formed at school. Another child has successfully completed his final year of school. When children do not have an education place, staff attend meetings and help to identify the right local provision.

Staff are nurturing in their approach to caring for children. They encourage children to enjoy meals together. They ensure that children have opportunities to play and to access activities in the community. This helps children build positive relationships with staff. One child said, 'I can't help smiling when I talk about [the home].'

Staff demonstrate flexibility in meeting children's needs. For example, they supported one child in his new home, to help him settle in and to provide continuity of care during this important period. In the absence of a manager, senior managers are providing high levels of practical and emotional support to the staff, remaining overnight on one occasion, to help staff manage an incident of a child going missing.

Staff support children to keep in touch with and see their families. Staff are sensitive to how this can make some children feel emotional and can understand and anticipate some behaviours that may follow.

The home is spacious and decorated to a good standard. Children have access to lots of toys, games and play equipment, at the home and in the garden. In a separate building, there is a craft room and a more private space that children can use when family or friends visit. Children have been supported to personalise their bedrooms. One child has been helping to wallpaper a larger bedroom that he will be moving in to.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Staff responses to some safeguarding concerns have been slow, placing children at increased risk of harm. One child did not have any restrictions on the use of her phone or the internet, despite serious concerns about her using forums to share self-harming incidents. This child was not consistently challenged about the use of 'live streaming' at the home, which was potentially breaching other children's privacy and confidentiality. Neither was she challenged about the gifts that she was receiving from unknown adults. Safety measures were put in place when senior managers were made aware by the independent person.

Risk assessments for children are detailed. However, they contain information that is out of date. As a result, these assessments do not adequately assess the level of risk or provide staff with current guidance on managing incidents. More recently, senior managers have put safety plans in place that provide clear guidance on some of the known risks.

Many of the children are supported with one-to-one supervision. It has not always been clear, at the start of each shift, which member of staff was responsible for supporting which child. There has been one occasion of a child leaving the home without permission and not being followed, despite them being on one-to-one staffing. In all other incidents of a child leaving the home without permission, staff have responded quickly and in line with the child's individual protocol. Staff allocation has improved more recently with senior managers having clear expectations of the delegation of tasks and responsibilities.

Missing-from-home protocols are shared with the local police. The local police liaison officer regularly visits the home and has had breakfast with the children to help build relationships. Staff request this officer for sensitive issues requiring police involvement as the children are familiar with him.

Staff do not routinely use sanctions or rewards to help influence children's behaviour. Some staff lack confidence in implementing boundaries. As a result, children do not receive consistent messages about what is acceptable, and children regularly test staff's responses to unacceptable behaviour. Senior managers have established a new reward system which staff are starting to use.

The manager uses the location risk assessment to help inform decisions about new children joining the home. However, this assessment does not contain current data and has not been updated following a serious incident at a local railway bridge.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The registered manager left the home in July 2021 after a long period of sickness absence. The manager wrote to each of the children to help them with this ending. The deputy manager and senior managers are providing day-to-day oversight of the home. Senior managers have identified areas of development for the home, and some new working practices were evident at the time of the inspection.

The staff team brings a range of transferable experience and skills but is a relatively new team that has recently lacked consistent management. Senior managers are now providing staff with supervision and are supporting staff to feel more confident in their roles. However, supervision is not consistently helping staff to reflect on and understand their own feelings in relation to children's behaviour and trauma. This increases the risk of staff not responding to children in the most appropriate way.

Managers regularly reflect on incidents with staff and children. However, during debriefs, they have lacked curiosity about children's behaviour and failed to consistently think about the lessons that could be learned to reduce risks further.

Managers have developed ways of formally gathering children's views for their review of the service. Children are aware of the advocacy services and complaints processes that are available to them.

The independent person provides a strong challenge to managers and holds them to account for addressing areas of development. The independent person's report offers a clear evaluation of the home's ability to safeguard children. This quality assurance process encourages improvement of practice

Senior managers have taken the lead in meeting the requirement and recommendations from the last inspection.

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 positive relationship standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on—</p> <p>mutual respect —</p> <p>an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and</p> <p>positive responses to other children and adults.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children do the same. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(x))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that supervision helps staff to reflect on and understand children's behaviours that challenge them.</p>	1 September 2021
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(v))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that risk assessments are accurate, and that staff follow the guidance to keep children safe.</p>	16 August 2021

<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</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that staff have the experience required to confidently manage the demands of their roles.</p>	<p>1 September 2021</p>
<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</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h))</p> <p>This relates to management oversight of the quality and accuracy of recording in children's records and learning from debriefs following incidents with children.</p>	<p>1 September 2021</p>

Recommendations

- The registered person should review the appropriateness and suitability of the location and premises of the home at least once a year. In particular, the provider should refer to the non-statutory, good-practice advice about completing the location risk assessment. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.1)

- The registered person should ensure that positive behaviour and relationships are reinforced, praised and encouraged. Unwanted behaviour should be challenged and discussed. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.14)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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: 1234621

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Priory Education Services Limited

Registered provider address: Fifth Floor, 80 Hammersmith Road, London W14 8UD

Responsible individual: Leon Brandon

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Paula Edwards, Social Care Inspector

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