

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 with autism, in 12 houses.

There is an Ofsted-registered school within the extensive grounds where the home is set. The organisation is also registered with CQC to provide residential homes for adults on the same site.

The manager registered with Ofsted on 23 May 2011.

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.

An assurance visit took place on 2 December 2020. No serious and/or widespread concerns were identified as a result of the visit.

Inspection dates: 13 to 15 July 2021

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: 25 June 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/06/2019	Full	Good
09/10/2018	Full	Good
22/11/2017	Full	Good
07/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children's needs are understood, and responded to, by the dedicated, warm and compassionate staff team. Observations of practice during the inspection, and comments from professionals and parents, demonstrate the high regard for the staff's care of their children. One professional said, 'I think they [the staff] work very hard to support the children to thrive' and another commented that 'staff go above and beyond every day'.

Children's experiences extend their development and learning well. Children's social opportunities have been restricted because of the pandemic. However, the staff have made good use of internal facilities, such as the on-site pool and grounds, to support children's enjoyment and growth. Examples of recent activities include baking bread in the on-site bakery and enjoying watching the final of Euro 2020 together in the home.

The staff diligently and patiently follow care plans which reflect children's needs. Children's views are well captured in their regularly reviewed, well-written care plans. For example, children who need a less stimulating environment have this provided. This helps children to settle and ensures that their needs are fully met in the home.

Education, care and health staff work well together. This benefits children as the integrated approach identifies, reviews and plans for the holistic and individual needs of children. A particularly effective joint programme of support enabled children to receive a COVID-19 vaccination. This dedicated support has enabled several children who are anxious about having injections to receive the vaccine.

The staff support most aspects of children's rights well, such as a child's wishes for snacks, what they want to do, and when the child might like some time alone. The staff capture the child's views within their care plans effectively. They monitor care plans regularly and generally make changes to plans appropriately. However, there are some established practices, such as weighing all children weekly, and checking children's daily fluid intake, which are applied to all children regardless of their needs. This results in less individualised care that does not fully reflect children's abilities, needs and progress.

The vast majority of parents feel well supported by the staff. For example, one parent wrote: 'Personalised care to meet our son's needs... [There are] many staff with lots of experience and skill with autism so we can ask advice.' Another parent said that the staff have a 'wonderful, supportive and connected relationship' with them, they receive regular feedback about their child's progress and know how well their child is doing. Where parents raise concerns about their child's care, these are responded to well.

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

Leaders and managers have developed a good safeguarding culture within the home. Staff are aware of children's vulnerabilities and implement specific individualised plans and strategies which minimise risks and support children to be safe.

Safeguarding concerns are addressed promptly and conscientiously. This approach supports other agencies to respond to concerns in a timely and effective manner. There was a brief procedural delay in referring one issue to the Disclosure and Barring Service. This is not strictly in accordance with government guidance issued under Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018, but the late referral had no impact on children's safety. This omission was rectified immediately during the inspection.

Managers have good systems to regularly review and monitor children's behaviour, especially during times of crisis or change. The online recording system quickly updates and alerts all staff to any changes in children's behaviour management plans, which promotes the staff having a consistent approach to a child's care.

Staff thoughtfully follow guidance on distraction techniques to prevent the use of restraint. For example, changes of staff occur to support children to calm and change activities when they consider it may help a child to calm. There is excellent practice in supporting children when they need help in managing their frustrations or worries. However, the quality of records remains variable. Most are well written and carefully reviewed. Other records do not contain all the necessary detail and some contained no debrief information.

Recruitment of the home's own permanent staff is exceptionally thorough and includes all required checks.

Members of the health and safety team are passionate and take pride in their roles to ensure that the large estate and properties are safe and well maintained. They are responsive and well organised to the challenges they experience. Redecoration during some restrictions throughout the pandemic has been difficult to achieve. There is an ongoing refurbishment plan being implemented to ensure that the quality of accommodation is improved in certain areas.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers have a clear and ambitious plan for the services that they want to provide to children and their families. They continually look for ways to improve children's support. For example, they are taking part in research that will provide greater insight into how children with autism learn best.

Leaders and managers know their strengths and weaknesses well and have varied plans to address any shortfalls which they identify. They recognise that staff recruitment and retention are crucial areas for improvement and have taken action

to improve these. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, which has affected staffing levels, the managers have maintained staffing levels throughout the pandemic.

Leaders and managers are working to reduce staff's concerns and keep them informed of the actions which they are taking. For example, regular newsletters are being sent and, with the latest changes to COVID-19 restrictions, senior managers are resuming more regular visits to the 12 houses. As a result, staff are positively engaged and working well as a team.

Improvements to staff induction, including the induction of agency staff, are being implemented but the changes are not yet fully evident. Some staff could clearly describe how their induction supported them to care for children. Other staff were less able to explain this to inspectors. Staff induction records are not always completed thoroughly. Records of what induction was completed to support a new member of staff are not consistently completed.

The quantity and quality of supervision meeting records are variable. Staff generally say that they feel well supported by their direct line managers, who make time for them. All supervisors have received training in how to provide supervision, which meets the requirement made at the last inspection. Leaders and managers plan to change the supervision policy and introduce more stringent monitoring systems.

There is a wide and varied training programme which relates to staff's differing roles and responsibilities, such as training for supervisors and specific training for children's needs, for example epilepsy. The care staff's knowledge of online safety for disabled children is variable, and managers acknowledged that this could be improved. For example, some staff could not clearly outline the risks and benefits of being online for children with autism.

More staff are completing relevant qualifications within appropriate timescales in the last few months. An increase to staff within the training team from September 2021 is intended to improve this further. Managers have not yet reviewed how agencies support their staff to gain the necessary qualification; this action will commence from September 2021. The recommendation made at the last inspection is therefore fully actioned but is in the process of being met.

Professionals are unanimously positive about the care that children receive and the working relationships which they have with the staff. One social worker wrote to Ofsted saying, 'I have been impressed with the preparation and depth of information shared by staff with professionals'. Another social worker reported that 'all the staff of [the home] have been wonderful over the last twelve months, in the most extraordinary circumstances'.

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 registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes—</p> <p>details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure;</p> <p>a description of the measure and its duration;</p> <p>details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure;</p> <p>the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and</p> <p>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")—</p> <p>has spoken to the user about the measure; and</p> <p>has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and</p> <p>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.</p> <p>(Regulation 35(3)(a)(ii)(iv)(v)(vii)(b)(i)(c))</p>	31 August 2021
<p>The registered person must—</p> <p>ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction.</p> <p>(Regulation 33(1)(a))</p>	31 August 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</p> <p>This relates to making sure that there is no delay to relevant concerns being notified to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). (Regulation 12(1)(2)(v))</p>	<p>31 August 2021</p>
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that their plans to check all agency staff gain a mandatory qualification in an appropriate timescale are implemented in full. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.16)
- The registered should ensure that supervision is consistently regular and supports the staff to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children who they care for. Records of supervision meetings should always appropriately record what was discussed and any actions that will be taken. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- The registered person should review the care staff's knowledge about online safety concerns for children with autism. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.12)
- The registered person should monitor and review that any customary practices, such as weighing children, are regularly reviewed to assess if these actions remain appropriate for the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', pages 54 to 55, paragraph 10.23)

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: SC069336

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: Prior's Court Foundation

Responsible individual: Michael Robinson

Registered manager: Sarah Butcher

Inspectors

Ruth Coler, Social Care Inspector
Peter Jackson, Social Care Inspector
Paul Taylor, Social Care Inspector
Keith Riley, Social Care Inspector

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