

1269421

Registered provider: Priory Education Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home provides care for up-to-three children. The home is owned and operated by a private provider.

The registered manager is suitably qualified.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of state, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 11 December 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 4 to 5 January 2022

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: 18 December 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/12/2019	Full	Good
14/02/2019	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
06/09/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children say that where they live is 'alright' and they like the staff who care for them. The children do not have local friends, and at times, staff struggle to motivate the children to undertake activities outside of the home. This has been made worse due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Additionally, children have not yet formed strong friendships in the home. They are reluctant to spend time with each other. Children enjoy having close bonds with animals, and two children care for pets in their bedrooms. When children are persuaded to go out, they enjoy going for walks and shopping trips with staff. Children do have fun with staff when they spend time with them. This helps to develop stronger relationships.

All the children had struggled with educational attendance before being cared for at this home. Since joining the home, children have made educational progress, and staff are working hard to motivate children to attend daily education. This is progressing, and overall attendance has been much improved. For example, one child, who had low school attendance, has now attended regularly since October 21.

Children are encouraged to attend health appointments. Staff have been proactive in advocating for children who may have additional learning needs. For example, some children have been supported through an assessment for autism. Not all children are confident with their self-image, and some children have issues with anxiety. Children can speak with a psychological therapist who regularly visits. Although not all children engage with the therapist, some do and find this beneficial. The therapist also provides support to staff to help them better understand the needs of the children. This supports staff to improve care practice.

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

The manager provides very good oversight and makes certain that children and staff are safe. For example, following a particularly serious safeguarding incident, the manager increased staffing levels and supported the staff team. The efforts of the manager also ensured the placement stability for the child concerned. This child's Independent Reviewing Officer described the manager as 'an excellent advocate for the child'.

Children's risk assessment documents are detailed. However, it is not always clear whether children are making progress in relation to the identified risk factors. For example, some risks are historic in nature, and it is unclear if the risk remains a concern. Staff provide good help and support to children to overcome areas of concern and risk. For example, one child who previously posed a risk to animals has now been supported to care for their own pet. This is going well, and the child is now gentle and responsible when caring for animals.

Staff speak with children regularly about the children's feelings and behaviour. The views of the child do not yet come through strongly in these discussions. Children are not yet provided with enough opportunities during conversations to express their emotions or views. Children's documents do not demonstrate how staff have helped children to reflect following situations and incidents or provided alternative courses of action to manage strong feelings and emotions.

Staff are trained to provide the support and help that children need if they have harmed themselves. However, more analysis and evaluation are needed when deciding to conduct a room search to remove items that could pose a risk to a child. Additionally, the relevant documents do not set out the children's views before or following a room search taking place.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has worked hard to improve staff retention and recruitment. Although staff turnover was higher at the beginning of the year-2021, staff retention has since improved. This has resulted in children being cared for by a stable and sufficiently skilled staff team. Staff are well trained, and they receive regular professional supervision, which keeps them on track to provide good care to children.

The staff speak positively about the management team. They unanimously enjoy their roles in caring for the children. Managers ensure that staff are thoroughly vetted to ensure they are safe to work with children. However, on one occasion, a risk assessment was not completed by the manager when there had been a historical concern about an applicant. There was no evidence of this potential risk having been evaluated before the member of staff was appointed.

Overall, the children's records and other relevant documents are well maintained. However, there could be more consistency in ensuring that records are kept up to date. For example, when one child was being supported to improve their independence skills, there had been no recording of this since July 21. Some of the language used in documents, and in conversation by some staff, can at times appear institutionalised. For example, words such as 'the setting', 'unsupervised', 'on-site' and 'contact' are used.

The house is well maintained. Children say they have everything they need and that they enjoy their home. Stakeholder feedback is positive; they describe good communication and good care provided to children. From their starting points, all children are making good progress.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that a child's bedroom is not generally entered without their permission, though it may be necessary to establish routines to allow for rooms to be cleaned regularly. Usually, rooms should only be searched if the child has been informed or asked for their permission. Immediate searching may be necessary where there are reasonable grounds for believing that there is a risk to the child's or another person's safety or well-being. This specifically relates to there being a written evaluation following a room search. Children should be consulted when a room search is happening, whenever it is safe to do so. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 16, 3.20)
- The registered person should ensure that children are supported to understand how to build friendships with other children. They should be able to spend time with their friends in the local community, in their home area, and by having friends visit them at the home, in line with the child's plans, age and understanding. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 38, 8.7)
- The registered person should lead and manage the home in a way that delivers the ethos, outcomes and approach set out in the home's statement of purpose. They should also play a key role in shaping the ethos of the home through developing a culture of high aspiration for children which is demonstrated through the care, resources and opportunities offered to the children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 52, 10.4)
- The registered person should, as set out in regulations 31-33, is responsible for maintaining good employment practice. They must ensure that recruitment, supervision and performance management of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. This specifically relates to the manager completing risk assessments for new staff, when necessary, to assess potential risk posed to children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61 13.1)

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: 1269421

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Priory Education Services Limited

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

Responsible individual: Katherine Bridon

Registered manager: Daniel Grant

Inspector

Andi Lilley-Tams, Social Care Inspector

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