

2509473

Registered provider: Back on Track Children's Services SE Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is privately owned and is registered to provide care for up to four children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The service and the manager registered with Ofsted on 12 February 2019.

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.

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 December 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

Date of last inspection: 8 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: declined in effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/01/2020	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
21/05/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are settled and happy in this home and are making good progress. They enjoy warm and supportive relationships with the staff. Spontaneous acts of affection, such as hugs, are commonplace, and interactions are laced with humour, with staff and children clearly enjoying each other's company.

All the children now have school places, due to the efforts made by managers in the home and the wider organisation. This has helped the children to integrate into education after significant disruptions and absences before coming to live here.

Children enjoy varied activities and are supported to join local clubs. Staff see this as important in helping them to develop their social skills, broadening their life experience and developing their confidence.

Children's views are regularly sought, both in group meetings and during individual sessions with members of staff. They have a voice in the running of the home and influence choices, particularly in relation to outings, holidays and menus. Their views are promoted and valued, which is particularly evident in the discussions that members of staff have with them after incidents or when they are upset.

Some staff have not recorded all their key-work sessions with children. Although this has not affected children's progress, it means that evidence is lacking about the efforts made by children and staff to help the children to consider aspects of their lives and how they feel.

The registered manager is acutely aware of how new admissions of children can affect the stability of the group and how this can impact on progress. She has used learning from past placements which did not end as positively as the team had hoped. As a result, she has worked hard to ensure that the current group of children are compatible and that the group dynamics have been carefully considered. Consequently, each child is making progress and feels safe living in this home.

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

All members of staff have a very good understanding of each child's strengths and vulnerabilities. They use this knowledge to keep the children safe. They also help the children to develop their own knowledge and strategies to increase their awareness of risk and to improve life skills, such as managing frustration and becoming more tolerant.

All members of staff know what to do and who to inform if they have concerns about a child's welfare. This process is followed effectively in practice and ensures that the correct agencies are informed and that safety plans are implemented promptly if there are safeguarding concerns.

Members of staff know of the external agencies that they can approach if they need to raise concerns. However, some staff are unaware of the role of the designated officer within the local safeguarding system. This is a knowledge gap that needs to be addressed.

Each child has a bespoke behaviour management plan for staff to follow. While these are regularly reviewed and updated, not all staff sign the plans to confirm that they know when the strategies have been changed. This has not compromised the good quality of staff management and support for children, but it could undermine consistency if not all staff are aware of changes to behaviour management plans.

Records of incidents which have required the use of physical intervention are closely monitored and evaluated by the registered manager. These ensure that the child concerned and the staff who instigated the interventions can reflect and learn from any incident and adjust strategies if needed.

There are clear protocols for staff to follow should a child go missing from care or be absent without permission. The protocols are implemented effectively, and staff make concerted efforts to look for children if they go missing or are absent. As a result, children have been returned safely due to staff's efforts and diligent application of the agreed plans.

The current group of children are unable to have unsupervised time away from the home due to their ages and understanding of risks. This is explained to them carefully and in a way in which they understand. The support and nurturing provided have ensured that no child currently living in the home has had incidents of going missing or being away without permission.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

This is a well-managed home. The registered manager provides clear, well-considered leadership, which results in motivated staff who provide a good standard of care to the children.

The registered manager is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the service and has clear plans in place to develop staff's skills and to ensure that they maintain the quality of care and continue to promote good outcomes for the children.

This is a developing staff team which varies in experience and diversity. All staff receive training which ensures that they have the skills and knowledge to understand the needs of the children in their care. Additionally, all members of staff receive regular supervision so that they can explore and reflect on their performance and how working with the children can affect them.

Group supervision is organised by an external independent facilitator if needed. This helps the staff team to reflect on any issues which affect them within the home, and the impact of incidents or specific issues. This provides a safe and positive space for

everyone to consider practice and helps staff and managers to consider how to improve the service.

The registered manager advocates strongly on behalf of children in her care. She has made sustained and successful efforts to seek school placements for children. External professionals and other stakeholders, such as relatives, speak positively about the quality of communication and efforts made on behalf of the children. This, in turn, helps the children to develop their life skills and to enjoy success in their lives.

Record-keeping is not consistent. Although this has not had any impact on children's progress or safety, some staff have not endorsed key documents, such as behaviour support plans, to show that they understand them, and not all key-work sessions have been recorded.

There is regular auditing of medication administration. On one occasion, an error was noted. Although the member of staff ensured that the child was safe and followed the organisation's policy in this matter, the policy did not recommend that external medical advice be sought to ensure that the decision made was correct. The policy regarding missed doses or errors made in medication administration is not sufficiently specific.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been managed well. Staffing has remained consistent during the pandemic and the children have been supported well to adjust to any changes, such as attending school and expectations while they are out of the home. This has been achieved to a good standard by careful and thoughtful guidance, and by the care provided to the children.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the policy regarding the administration of medication makes it clear to staff that where the home has questions or concerns about a child's medication, they should approach an expert such as a general medical practitioner, community pharmacist or designated nurse for children looked after. Specifically, staff should know who to contact if they make an error regarding the administration of medication. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)
- The registered person should ensure that members of staff are aware of the policies for the protection of children. The registered person should include information about whistle-blowing, with clear procedures for how a staff member should report to an appropriate authority any concerns they have about a child within the home being at risk of, or already experiencing, significant harm. The policy should reflect on the principles set out in the 'Freedom to speak up' review. This particularly relates to ensuring that all members of staff are aware of the role of the designated officer. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.15)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. This particularly relates to ensuring that all members of staff show that they are aware of the contents of each child's individual behaviour management plans and endorse them as expected, and that key-work sessions are consistently recorded. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: 2509473

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Back on Track Children's Services SE Ltd

Registered provider address: 185 Dover Road, Walmer, Deal, Kent CT14 7NB

Responsible individual: Christopher Campbell

Registered manager: Katie Smissen

Inspector

Paul Taylor, Social Care Inspector

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