

# 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 autistic spectrum disorder, in 12 houses. There is an Ofsted-registered school within the extensive grounds. The organisation is also registered with CQC to provide residential homes for adults on the same site.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since 23 May 2011.

### Inspection dates: 3 to 5 May 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:** 13 July 2021

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/07/2021	Full	Good
25/06/2019	Full	Good
09/10/2018	Full	Good
22/11/2017	Full	Good

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Children benefit from warm, nurturing relationships with staff. Staff demonstrate an unwavering commitment, enhancing children's lives and providing a range of positive, developmental experiences. The effects of COVID-19 have had a significant impact on the staff team. Staff retention has been difficult, as has recruitment. Despite this, the remaining staff have shown admirable resilience and determination to ensure that children are safe and well cared for. This has ensured that children continue to make progress socially, emotionally and in their communication.

The multi-disciplinary team of school staff, residential staff, therapists and nursing staff contribute significantly to the progress that children make. Children's holistic care is considered in multi-disciplinary meetings. Staff monitor actions and outcomes via the provider's system of 'I Can'. Staff are able to demonstrate progress against clear goals in children's plans and readily identify areas for development. All children are making good progress in education.

The therapy team has creatively supported children to engage in medical appointments and procedures using a 'desensitisation programme'. Staff work patiently with children to better inform them of upcoming appointments and advise them of what will take place. This has supported children to engage successfully in important health goals such as COVID-19 vaccinations, attending dental appointments and managing lifelong health conditions.

Children benefit from a variety of resources available to them. The track and playground, swimming pool, sensory room and soft play areas are well used and allow children to stimulate their curiosity. Staff have also created a Scout group and drumming group for children to explore their creative expression. Two staff members have volunteered their time each week to facilitate these very popular activities. A parent commented that this club has given their son a new interest and focus which has enriched his life.

The school has also supported a wide range of external activities including charity fun runs, music festivals and seasonal celebrations. These have all supported children to have a rich and fulfilling life experience.

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

Passionate, caring and dedicated staff work tirelessly to ensure that children are safe and protected from harm wherever possible. They are guided in this by a highly skilled designated safeguarding lead (DSL) who has a comprehensive knowledge of the specific risks and vulnerabilities for children.

Records are meticulously maintained and lend themselves to careful tracking and monitoring. This has helped the DSL to ensure that all necessary safeguarding actions and notifications are enacted in a timely manner.

Close working between the DSL and appointed safeguarding trustee has supported some highly reflective and insightful improvements to systems and processes. This has given staff the confidence and knowledge they need to apply safeguarding practice consistently and effectively.

Staff have found creative ways to support children to recognise the importance of safe internet use. Children have also taken part in video campaigns to help other students understand the nature of positive online relationships and experiences.

There has also been some excellent work with children to help them understand appropriate boundaries around physical space and touch. This has helped to reduce some potentially harmful behaviours.

The health and safety team proactively considers and responds to risk. Children participate in evacuation drills, which helps to lower their anxiety and be better prepared in any emergency.

Staff show strength and determination in challenging providers of agency staff where there are shortfalls in staff practice. They also proactively share information or concerns about staff practice with wider safeguarding networks. The DSL is also introducing joint interviews with employment agencies, helping to assess if workers have the right skills and aptitude for the role. In some cases, leaders have not fully explored the reasons for agency staff leaving prior employment.

The management of allegations is thorough and timely and ensures that staff who raise concerns have their concerns investigated quickly. Investigations by leaders are detailed and outcomes are clear.

Children with very complex needs are supported by unendingly patient and caring staff. There are many examples where behaviours which others may find challenging have reduced significantly as a result of close partnership working between the therapy teams and staff to find effective strategies and solutions.

When physical intervention occurs, all required information is recorded. However, there are often delays in staff and managers debriefing about the event. This means that the usefulness of these discussions is affected due to avoidable delay.

Staff, parents and professionals agree that children are effectively safeguarded. However, it is clear that there is a shared anxiety around the potential impact of current staffing shortages.

## **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

Staff have often worked long hours due to the difficulties of staffing some homes. This has had an impact on morale. There is an anxiety that this level of commitment is not sustainable and that children's well-being may suffer as a result. Managers acknowledge the fragility of the situation. They are working hard to ensure that children are safe and benefit from good-quality care and enjoyable experiences at the home. Managers have some innovative and ambitious plans to improve recruitment and retention of quality staff.

Managers have a good insight into each child's needs, progress, and well-being. They identify where children need extra help and ensure that there is a cohesive response from the multi-disciplinary teams. Professional expertise is applied to scrutinise behaviours and develop strategies. However, staff knowledge of the input and output of these services is not consistent.

Training is varied and ensures that staff have the skills and knowledge to care for children with very complex needs.

Staff supervisions are still embedding, and the recording of some sessions is lacking in context and clarity. Sessions are not always delivered in line with expectations of both quality and frequency.

Leaders and managers are well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. They have clear and ambitious plans to address these. The sharing of these plans with the wider staff team is inconsistent and needs to be embedded across all areas of the service.

Professionals and parents give positive feedback about the quality of communication and transparency from leaders. They are also aware of the current challenges and pressures faced by the homes.

Equality and diversity are central to the beliefs and ethos of the service. Each child has a unique identity, and this individuality is both championed and celebrated by the whole team.

Children have numerous, innovative opportunities to voice their opinions and feelings. The participation strategy has ensured that there is a wide range of research-based approaches to seek out children's views and thoughts. These, in turn, have contributed to wider research into effective communication with children who have autism spectrum disorder. Staff work hard to maximise the capacity of children with complex needs to actively participate in day-to-day decision-making.

## 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 all employees—</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and</p> <p>have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)(c))</p>	31 August 2022

### Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that those with a management role are visible and accessible to staff and able to deliver their leadership and/or management responsibilities. In particular, the registered manager should ensure that management plans are consistently shared and embedded across the service. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.7)
- The registered person should ensure that they are responsible for maintaining good employment practice. They must ensure that recruitment, supervision, and performance management of staff safeguard children and minimise potential risks to them. In particular, the registered person should ensure that the reasons that agency staff have left prior jobs are explored and recorded. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)
- 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. In particular, the registered person should ensure that, where there are clear internal guidelines for maintenance and completion of records, that these are adhered to. ('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:** SC069336

**Provision sub-type:** Residential special school

**Registered provider:** Prior's Court Foundation

**Registered provider address:**

**Responsible individual:** Michael Robinson

**Registered manager:** Sarah Butcher

## Inspectors

Peter Jackson, Social Care Inspector

Paul Taylor, Social Care Inspector

Matt Nicholls, Social Care Inspector



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