

1241836

Registered provider: Aspris Children's Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is privately owned and run by an education specialist service provider. It is registered to care for up to seven children with complex needs that may include autism spectrum disorder and associated difficulties. The home is located within the provider's school campus.

The education provision was not inspected at this inspection.

The registered manager's post has been vacant since 18 February 2022.

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 July 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 **requires improvement to be good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 14 September 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/09/2021	Full	Good
04/02/2020	Full	Requires improvement to be good
25/03/2019	Full	Good
23/03/2018	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children feel well cared for and valued in the home. Staff provide genuine nurturing care, and this is evident by the way children are welcomed with hugs and affection each day when they return from school. Staff make every effort to make children's time while they are at the home enjoyable. Their bedrooms are personalised and children are active in choosing the food they eat and the things they do.

There is a sense of community amongst staff and children. Evening routines are consistent, and children know what activities are coming next. Children get along well with each other, sharing dinner times around the table together. They meet weekly to discuss topics such as different emotions or learning about different cultures and countries. Staff know the children well and understand their communication needs. This helps ensure that each child can contribute using their preferred method of communication. This has enabled some children to improve on their verbal communication skills.

Children's personal care is also thoughtfully considered to protect children's dignity and to promote their well-being. Children have made progress in their ability to use the toilet unaided, with many no longer needing toileting aids which they once relied on.

Since the previous inspection, only one child has joined the home. The child was carefully matched to ensure that his needs were compatible with the other children in the home, and has settled comfortably into the existing group.

A child who is planning to move to college is being supported sensitively by staff. After years of being part of the group, staff are committed to supporting this child to move on positively and are going the extra mile to ensure the child settles into their new college. Staff create a calm, predictable space for children within the home, and parents commented positively on the care and support provided to children by staff.

Children are supported to engage positively in the world around them. Trips to restaurants have enabled children to learn to eat socially, and trips to theme parks have enabled children to interact with the public in a safe and fun environment. One child's cultural needs are met by staff going with the child to their home area to purchase specialist food, and enabling the child to speak in their first language. This demonstrates how staff support the things that matter most to their children.

There have been significant challenges in ensuring that there are enough staff to meet the needs of the children. Staff have worked long hours and shown good commitment to provide children with consistent care. There has been some impact in relation to the quality of recording and, in one instance, a child's placement ended sooner than expected due to staff shortages. This was managed well, however, to ensure that this child returned home in a planned way with support.

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

Staff know the children well. They are aware of the risks facing children and the things which may unsettle them. Since the last inspection, only one child has required physical intervention. The record of this incident was clear; however, the manager had not reviewed the incident to satisfy themselves that there were no areas for learning.

Children's written plans are not regularly reviewed or updated and do not identify clear goals and targets for children. This makes it difficult for staff to be sure that they are supporting children to reach their potential. In practice, staff understand children's needs and provide consistent care that helps children feel valued and cared for. They quickly identify any changes in a child's behaviour and intervene promptly to help children negotiate situations that are difficult for them. This helps children to calm quickly and avoid distress.

The provider has dedicated teams assigned to recruitment and maintenance. They work closely with the deputy manager to ensure that all newly recruited staff and agency staff are appropriately checked, and that any maintenance or known risks are quickly addressed. Staff are clear about children's evacuation plans in the event of a fire. This gives children a safe space to live in.

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

The home has not had a registered manager since February 2022. The responsible individual is also away from work, and it is unclear when they will return to their post. During this time, the home has been managed by the deputy manager, who has worked tirelessly to reduce the impact of reduced management capacity on the care for the children.

The vacancies in senior management and the uncertainty regarding these positions have caused apprehension among the staff. However, staff are overwhelmingly positive about the support, care and empathy shown to them by the deputy manager.

During this period, management monitoring has suffered and resulted in shortfalls in relation to the quality of written care plans, manager's oversight of incidents and gaps in the expected frequency of staff supervision. The deputy manager has not had any formal supervision for several months.

The provider has credible plans to increase staffing levels and establish stable management arrangements. A new manager has been appointed and is due to commence their role on 1 August 2022. The provider has recently increased management support to the deputy manager and has better systems in place to provide management oversight of the quality of care provided to children.

Arrangements for children who do not attend the organisation's school are not clear. This has left one child unable to benefit from the same level of therapeutic support as other children.

The deputy manager advocates strongly for children within the professional network. This ensures that children's needs remain at the heart of care planning and that the provider's assessment of the child's needs informs their relevant plans.

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 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 the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(d))</p>	1 September 2022
<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>In particular, ensure management oversight of the quality of written care plans and reviewing incidents and physical interventions.</p>	1 September 2022
<p>The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children's home if—</p> <p>there is no registered manager in respect of the home. (Regulation 27 (1)(a))</p>	1 September 2022

<p>The registered person must—</p> <p>ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction;</p> <p>ensure that each permanent appointment of an employee is subject to the satisfactory completion of a period of probation; and</p> <p>provide each employee with a job description outlining the employee’s responsibilities.</p> <p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (1)(a)(b)(c) (4)(b))</p>	<p>1 September 2022</p>
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Recommendations

- The registered person should play a key role in shaping the ethos of the home through developing a culture of high aspirations for children, which is demonstrated through the care, resources and opportunities offered to the children. Specifically, there should be a system in place to monitor and review the progress children have made. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 52, paragraph 10.4)
- The registered person should ensure that they and their staff engage proactively with the placing authority to contribute fully to the relevant plans for the child’s care on an ongoing basis. This specifically refers to staff holding and knowing children’s statutory plans. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 56, paragraph 11.3)
- The registered person should ensure that the home’s Statement of Purpose is child-focused, indicating how the home provides individualised care to meet the quality standards for the children in their care. This specifically relates to the role of the provider’s therapy team in meeting the needs of children who are not in the provider’s education setting. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 14, paragraph 3.5)

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: 1241836

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Aspris Children's Services Limited

Registered provider address: The Forge, Church Street West, Woking, Surrey
GU21 6HT

Responsible individual: Hannah Cox

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Matt Nicholls, Social Care Inspector

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