

1211772

Registered provider: Aspris Children's Services Limited

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a private provider. It provides care for up to six children who experience social and emotional difficulties. At the time of the inspection, two children were living in the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in November 2020 but was not in work at the time of the inspection.

Inspection date: 16 March 2023

Date of last inspection: 5 July 2022

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection:

Ofsted required the provider to investigate a matter of concern in December 2022. The investigation into the matter is ongoing.

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

The care of children

Children have trusted relationships with staff that have built up over time. This means children are able to share their worries and concerns and seek advice from the adults who care for them. The children participate regularly in discussions with staff that focus on their specific needs. The sessions are a strength of the home and provide consistent and clear guidance to the children. Staff use their relationships with the children to try to influence them to make good decisions.

Children have new experiences with staff and their peers. Trips out and camping holidays, for example, broaden the children's horizons. When children have aspirations, the staff support them to explore what their options are and encourage them to achieve. This validates the choices children make.

Previously, children's complaints were not properly understood or responded to. There is now a procedure in place that is being followed to address this issue. This means children's issues are taken seriously and resolved to their satisfaction. This helps children feel that their views and worries are legitimate and are taken seriously.

Children use bad language regularly, and staff do not always challenge this. This could disadvantage children in the future if they do not learn what is and what is not socially acceptable.

The safety of children

The children's risk assessments are regularly updated and reviewed. When new risks emerge, these are incorporated into children's risk assessments, and any plans to mitigate risks are recorded. However, last year, new and serious risks to one child emerged, and the response from staff was ineffective. Lessons have been learned from this and are being implemented with the children who still live in the home.

Staff work with other agencies to promote children's safety. However, on one occasion last year, a child was held multiple times to keep them safe in school. This incident happened with insufficient challenge to understand and question why the level of holds used was necessary. This fails to recognise the need to advocate and challenge on behalf of children.

When children go missing, staff know and follow plans to try to return them swiftly and safely. When children return, sometimes the required independent return home interview has not been provided or offered to the child. This shortfall leads to opportunities being missed to reduce future incidents by understanding the reasons

behind children's actions and the push-and-pull factors that cause children to go missing.

There have been a number of allegations against staff, and the home's procedures have largely been followed in investigating these. These include working with the designated officer in local authorities. However, senior leaders failed to follow the home's safeguarding policy on one occasion, leading to unnecessary delay. This has the potential to expose children to unnecessary risk.

Since the last inspection, there has been a significant escalation in safeguarding incidents, and not all notifiable incidents have been passed to the regulator. This limits the regulator's opportunities for effective oversight of incidents and to check that all relevant actions have been taken by the provider to promote children's safety.

Staff are trained on whistle-blowing and raising safeguarding concerns. However, some staff members' working knowledge falls short. This results in them having insufficient understanding to be able to respond to concerns regarding the practice of other staff.

Staff are appropriately trained to manage behaviours. Incidents of children being held to keep them or others safe are relatively infrequent. Following the use of physical interventions, debriefs are provided to both staff and children. This helps children to feel safe, and it also helps staff to learn the most effective ways to support children when they are in crisis.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

There has been a period of instability in the management of the home, and the registered manager is currently not in work. This instability has led to staff feeling unsettled. However, in response, the responsible individual has provided increased oversight of the home, which has led to improvements. The responsible individual, along with the deputy manager, has started to foster a new culture in the home. This is based on prioritising safeguarding practices and consistency in the way staff care for the children.

Regular children's meetings capture children's views, and these are acted on by staff. Children's suggestions and requests inform things that happen in the home. This makes children feel valued.

Staff complete a variety of training that provides them with the skills and knowledge to support the children and respond to their vulnerabilities. Training in attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is yet to be delivered to staff. This does not provide staff with all the relevant knowledge to carry out their roles effectively.

In respect of the requirements and recommendations raised at the last inspection, these have been partly met. One requirement and one recommendation will be restated.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/07/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
23/03/2022	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
13/12/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
15/10/2019	Full	Outstanding

What does the children’s home need to do to improve? Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered persons 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 persons must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<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>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child’s welfare. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(vi))</p>	30 April 2023
<p>In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff—</p> <p>if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority’s or a relevant person’s performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child’s needs are met in accordance with the child’s relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (c))</p>	30 April 2023
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p> <p>there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(e))</p>	30 April 2023
<p>The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>use this understanding to deliver care that meets children’s needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that staff—</p>	30 April 2023

help each child to develop resilience and skills that prepare the child to return home, to live in a new placement or to live independently as an adult. (Regulation 6 (1)(b) (2)(b)(vi))	
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Recommendations

- The registered person should have expectations that standards of behaviour should be high for all staff and children in the home. These standards should be clear and unambiguous. Children should be supported to develop understanding and empathy towards each other. Positive behaviour and relationships should be reinforced, praised and encouraged; poor behaviour (including the use of bad language) should be challenged and discussed. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.11)
- The registered person should ensure that when a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority provides an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. The home should take account of the information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.3)
- The registered person should ensure staff are made familiar with the home's internal whistle-blowing procedures. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.9)
- The registered person should ensure that the staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs, specifically about attention deficit hyperactivity disorder training. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1211772

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: Lauren Gilbey

Registered manager: Rachel Ridley

Inspector

Rachel Ruth, Social Care Inspector

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