

SC040175

Registered provider: The Drive Care Homes Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is privately owned and provides care for up to eight children with learning disabilities. There were eight children living at the home at the time of the inspection.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since April 2017.

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 October 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 13 December 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/12/2022	Full	Outstanding
02/03/2022	Full	Outstanding
12/11/2019	Full	Good
18/06/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children make exceptional progress in this home. A social worker for one of the children said that because of the dedication, perseverance and support of committed staff, the child's vocabulary and self-care skills have vastly improved over a short period of time. Another child, who had very limited verbal communication when they arrived, is now able to make their wishes known by structuring simple sentences.

Children are cared for by a kind and dedicated team of staff who are knowledgeable about children's specific needs, vulnerabilities and individual plans. This understanding is developed through training, supervision and team discussions. As a result, children benefit from consistent boundaries and predictable responses from staff.

The processes which are followed when children move into and out of the home are thorough and thoughtful. Since the last inspection, one child has had a successful planned move out of the home and another child has moved in. Since arriving, this child has been supported to understand their daily routine, sit with others at mealtimes and enjoy a short holiday with the other children. Staff make sure that they notice achievements which may seem small, but which are real progress for children.

The registered manager and staff have positive and trusting relationships with the children. The staff work well together and ensure that the children benefit from a calm, safe and happy environment. Using their individual communication styles, children confirmed that they feel safe and know how to raise any worries.

Children's views are sought in a variety of ways and acted on by the staff and the registered manager. For example, children were recently consulted about the refurbishment of the communal lounge. Empowering children to have ownership gives them a sense of pride in their surroundings. Staff responses to requests from children are swift, and children are kept informed of progress through weekly children's meetings, which they are encouraged to chair.

The manager and staff think creatively, to ensure that all children can experience a wide range of social and recreational activities. For example, one child wanted to visit Paris to see the Eiffel Tower. They had never been abroad, and the team made this happen. Another child was able to enjoy a short holiday with their parents, which was planned and supported by the registered manager and his team. The child's parent spoke highly of the care that their child receives at the home and the beneficial impact that this has had on wider family relationships.

The staff actively promote community inclusion for the children and religious, cultural, dietary and identity needs are met well. Children enjoy shopping trips, go

swimming, visit the library and enjoy regular attendance at places of worship. Each child has individual staff to support them on activities and detailed risk assessments are understood and implemented by staff. An independent reviewing officer for one child said how impressed she was with the number of activities that the child has been supported to join in with.

Children enjoy healthy meals. They are involved in choosing menus and are encouraged to help prepare food, which teaches them valuable life skills. During the inspection, one child was thoroughly enjoying being in the kitchen with staff, helping to prepare vegetables for the evening meal.

Working in partnership with other professionals is a significant strength of this home. Managers proactively advocate for children to ensure that their complex needs are met. Staff support children to access the right education provision. All children attend school and are making good progress.

Children receive the specialist healthcare support that they need. Staff challenge delays in access to services and decisions made by other professionals when they believe that those decisions are not made with children's best interests in mind.

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

Children's safety is given top priority by the registered manager. Safeguarding is comprehensively covered in staff induction and ongoing mandatory training. The registered manager ensures that staff fully understand their safeguarding responsibilities. Safeguarding children is a standing agenda item in staff supervision sessions and team meetings.

The registered manager has exceptionally high expectations of staff conduct, to ensure that children are safeguarded. Children have thorough and detailed behaviour support plans and risk assessments which clearly describe how to keep them safe. Plans are shared with other agencies working with the children to ensure consistency.

As a result of extremely comprehensive training, staff are highly skilled at responding to individual children in a calm and informed way. Positive behaviour is promoted, and staff skilfully use de-escalation and distraction techniques. This, and the positive relationships enjoyed between children and staff, mean there are exceptionally low levels of behavioural incidents. There have been no incidents since the last inspection which have required physical restraint.

Staff were able to confidently describe the steps they would take if they had safeguarding concerns. They could name the external agencies they should approach if they had any concerns about children's safety or well-being.

Safer recruitment practices are understood and implemented effectively. All necessary checks are in place to reduce the risk of unsuitable people working in the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The long-standing registered manager is exceptionally committed to the home and helps to support other managers who are new to the organisation. He works tirelessly to provide the highest possible standards of care for the children and speaks passionately about the progress that they are making. He has extremely positive relationships with the children, their parents and external professionals.

Staff morale is high. Staff speak positively about the impact that the registered manager has on the home. He has high expectations of his staff team and encourages high standards which support the home's ethos and statement of purpose. External partners and staff acknowledge the registered manager's ambition for children and his determination to make sure that they get the support and services that they need. Staff have confidence in his management and, consequently, they feel empowered and motivated to fulfil their roles to the best of their ability. They describe him as a calm, knowledgeable and inspirational manager.

The registered manager and leadership team welcome feedback from external sources. Criticisms and comments about the service are seen as an opportunity to learn, reflect and improve. In one example, in response to a recommendation from the independent person, the registered manager has been updating and redesigning the children's guide, incorporating views from children and staff.

Staff supervision takes place regularly. One member of staff said supervision helps her do the best job she can and that the registered manager is always ready to listen to any ideas and suggestions. Staff value supervision as a time to focus on the work that they do and the impact this has on children's progress, safety and well-being.

Staff appraisals take place annually and contribute to personal development plans. These are reviewed in supervision. Appraisals would be further enhanced by including feedback from children and external professionals.

The registered manager actively promotes innovative practice. He embraces new ideas that help to enhance children's experiences. He is aware of the home's areas for development and has clear action plans in place to address these.

Professionals were unanimous in their praise of the home. One independent reviewing officer said, 'The home really is outstanding. The manager seems to have contacts everywhere and manages to get things done. I don't know how he does it.' An education professional said, 'Staff work with us brilliantly. They have helped us put strategies in place at school to provide consistent support and are always very supportive and available to our staff.'

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

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure all staff have their performance and fitness to carry out their role formally appraised at least once annually. This appraisal should take into account, where reasonable and practical, the views of other professionals who have worked with the staff member over the year and of children in the home's care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.5)

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: SC040175

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: The Drive Care Homes Ltd

Registered provider address: Cyrinus House, 18 Hatherley Road, Sidcup DA14 4BG

Responsible individual: Emmanuel Akpan

Registered manager: Ram Poudyal

Inspector

Mike Simmonds, Social Care Inspector

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