

1264841

Registered provider: Autism Sussex Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is run by a charitable organisation on behalf of the local authority and provides short-break services for disabled children. There are currently 27 children accessing the service on a rotational basis. Children have a wide range of physical and learning needs.

There were two different pairs of children staying at the home each night during this inspection.

The home and the manager registered with Ofsted in December 2017.

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 December 2023

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: 7 March 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: Good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/03/2023	Full	Good
25/11/2021	Full	Good
11/12/2019	Full	Good
14/03/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

There are currently 27 children accessing the service on a rotational basis. The children have a wide range of physical and learning needs. Staff have a good understanding of the children's individual needs and set targets for children to develop their skills when they stay. Staff respond promptly if a child is unwell, contacting parents and medical professionals. Feedback from parents about the care provided to their children is very positive.

Staff support a range of activities to provide the children with new experiences when they visit. These include baking, art, painting, sensory disco and trips to beaches. One parent said that their child has attended for six years and still loves visiting the home, and that staff always do fun things with them.

Children interact freely in the home. They have developed trusting relationships with staff. The staff group is long-established. Staff know the children well and can communicate with them using the children's preferred method of communication. They show genuine warmth and affection towards the children.

Staff respect children's views. They use visual aids and social stories to help children to share their views and choices, while increasing their level of understanding. Leaders and managers record children's complaints and formally respond to them. This helps children to feel heard and understand the actions taken to address their concerns.

The home is decorated with children's photos, communication symbols and seasonal decorations. Children's bedrooms are personalised with bedding that they have chosen, and staff encourage children to bring in items from home. Leaders and managers have completed significant repairs and redecoration in the home. However, more refurbishment is required to ensure that all areas of the home are decorated to provide a warm and comfortable environment for children.

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

Children's stays are well planned. Detailed planning ensures that children enjoy each other's company and that there are no incidents of bullying. New children enjoy tea visits with their parents before they stay overnight, so they can familiarise themselves with their new environment and speak to members of staff. These visits also help managers to assess the suitability of care arrangements for new children. However, managers do not demonstrate this well in the impact risk assessments that they complete for new children.

Children benefit from high staffing levels, and clear behaviour support plans help staff to meet children's needs. Since the last inspection, there have been no consequences for negative behaviour and staff have not had to restrain children.

There is a strong emphasis on implementing preventative strategies, and on liaising closely with schools and families to provide consistent care and support to children when they visit. As a result, children have positive experiences, including those children with the most significant needs.

Staff know the children very well and they work skilfully and compassionately to ensure that they enjoy their time at the home. Children's short breaks are arranged in advance, and allocation arrangements are based on parents' requests, taking account of the children's needs, abilities and staffing ratios. Parents share their children's health and welfare updates with staff before every short break. This helps to ensure that children have a safe and enjoyable stay.

Children's risk assessments are clear and comprehensive. Risk management strategies ensure that staff are aware of the specific risks to each child and the actions they must take to minimise those risks. Staff follow clear behaviour support plans, which help them to manage incidents and behaviour effectively.

Safeguarding practice is strong. Staff have a good understanding of whistleblowing procedures. Leaders and managers take allegations of harm seriously and act promptly when issues arise. This increases children's safety in the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The managers are strong advocates for children. They communicate effectively with the children's families and professional networks. Managers ensure that any decisions made in respect of children are planned, well thought out and in the children's best interests. For example, the registered manager challenged senior leaders when the home's minibuss that supports children to access the community was removed from the home. Children now have access to the minibuss during the school holidays.

The manager and staff know the children well and have high aspirations for them. They set and review individual achievable goals for each child when they visit for their short break. Feedback from professionals and parents about the leaders and staff is very positive.

Staff work well with other professionals, including social workers, education staff and families. They visit schools to share strategies on working with the children. This effective joint working with relevant professionals ensures that children receive well-coordinated care and support.

Staff receive regular and effective supervision. Supervision focuses on the children's needs, experiences, and plans. Safeguarding issues are discussed, as are staff development needs. This demonstrates effective management oversight of staff practice and development, and the progress that children are making. Staff are offered a range of online and in-person training; however, this is not reflected well in the workforce plan.

Three staff interviewed said they feel supported by the managers and equipped to fulfil their roles. New staff benefit from a detailed induction that helps them to understand their roles and responsibilities. However, staff team meetings are not regular enough to encourage shared learning and reflection on practice. In addition, some staff reported communication difficulties within the team during their recent appraisals. This limit learning and improvement in practice.

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 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>assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; (Regulation 12(1) (2)(a)(i))</p> <p>In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that impact risk assessments of new children demonstrate that all known and potential risks to children are thoroughly considered and assessed at the point of referral and consider if the staff team have the knowledge, skills and experience to meet the needs of children who use the services.</p> <p>This requirement was partly met from the last inspection, and is therefore restated.</p>	<p>29 February 2024</p>
<p>The leadership and management standard</p> <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>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose;</p> <p>ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate;</p>	<p>29 March 2024</p>

ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;
(Regulation 13.—(1)(2)(a) (b)(c)

In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that team meetings are regular to help staff reflection on the practice and support to communicate and work as a team.

Leaders and managers must ensure that the workforce plan fulfils all workforce related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 including any new training and qualifications completed by staff while working at the home and process for managing and improving poor performance.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that, in order for the children's home to be a nurturing and supportive environment that they continue to repair and decorate all areas of the homes' interior. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

Information about this inspection

Inspector has 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: 1264841

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Autism Sussex Ltd

Registered provider address: Autism Sussex Ltd, Sussex House, 19 High Street, Battle, TN33 0AE

Responsible individual: Samantha Fievez

Registered manager: Mandy Kennedy

Inspector

Dorothy Thompstone, Social Care Inspector

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