

SC489212

Registered provider: MacIntyre Academies

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is run by a not-for-profit company in partnership with the local authority. The home provides placements for children with disabilities and with a diagnosis of autism. The home provides residential care and short-break stays. There were 10 children receiving a service from the home at the time of the inspection.

A school operates on the same site as this children's home. The inspector only inspected the social care provision on this site.

There has been no registered manager in post since March 2023.

Inspection date: 9 January 2024

Date of last inspection: 6 June 2023

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

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 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.

Children have some positive relationships with the staff who are looking after them, despite there being a high number of agency staff. Children are happy and comfortable in their home and when accessing short breaks. Children mostly engage well in the various activities throughout the evening. There have been some improvements in staff skills in engaging the children through play, however, this is still an area for development. At times, staff lack initiative and are passive observers rather than engaging the children.

Children's plans are mostly clear and direct staff in how to follow routines for children. Agency staff or new staff are directed to the 'grab packs' for key information on how to support children, which contain essential details on meeting the children's needs. Risk assessments should be reviewed when there is a change in a child's behaviour or needs. However, there is no evidence in these documents to suggest this has happened.

Children who have moved into the home have had well-planned moves. They know where they are going to live and the staff who will be caring for them. A social worker commented that they were pleased with how one child had settled in and how staff maintain contact with her.

Children's health needs are well met through a supportive approach to healthy lifestyles, including a balanced diet and activities. Children are helped to increase the range of foods they will try, with guidance from the dietitian. Children's medication is monitored and, in the main, administered safely. However, there is not a definitive agreement in place with the prescriber about how staff administer one child's medication.

Staff thoughtfully respond to children who communicate their frustration or upset through their behaviour. Staff are calm and seek to understand how the children are feeling, while keeping everyone safe. Staff understand that a child's behaviour is a means of communication. This allows them to support children when they are becoming frustrated or upset. As a result, physical interventions are rarely used. Children's views are sought after incidents through debrief discussions using their alternative communication tools. Children can say why they were upset so staff can work to avoid such situations in the future.

The managers have worked to meet the requirements and recommendations set at the last inspection. Five of the eight requirements have been met. As a result of this inspection, three requirements and one recommendation have been repeated.

The manager has applied to be registered with Ofsted. Her permanent appointment has led to greater stability in the leadership of the home. There is a focus on upskilling staff by the manager and recently appointed deputy manager. This is strengthening the skills and understanding of staff and improving the quality of care. Staff are starting to be trained in trauma-informed practice to further develop their understanding of children's needs. The management team acknowledges that there is still work to be done to embed this learning in practice.

Staff supervision is improving, but supervisions are still not held at a suitable frequency for all staff, including agency workers.

The running of the home is not consistently effective, due to the lack of permanent staff and, at times, poor joint working with the school. For example, one child's overnight bag had not been brought over from the school, meaning there was an unnecessary delay in supporting the child to change their clothes and join the rest of the group. This led to the child becoming more unsettled.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/06/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
02/08/2022	Full	Good
16/05/2022	Full	Inadequate
21/09/2021	Full	Good

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, The 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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>understand the children’s home’s overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;</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 the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to—</p> <p>enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(ii))</p> <p>Specifically, that the staff have the skills to engage the children in activities.</p> <p>This requirement is repeated from the previous inspection.</p>	<p>29 February 2024</p>
<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>that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child’s health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(d))</p>	<p>29 February 2024</p>

<p>Specifically, that there is evidence that children’s individual needs are consistently risk assessed and that all staff are aware of the measures to reduce risk.</p> <p>This requirement is repeated from the previous inspection.</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>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that the home’s workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(b) (2)(e))</p> <p>Specifically, that the staff work as a team to make sure children’s belongings are available, to reduce stress and anxiety.</p>	29 February 2024
<p>The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children’s home. (Regulation 23 (1))</p> <p>Specifically, ensure that the prescriber gives written permission for administering medication in a way other than that stated on the prescription label.</p> <p>This requirement is repeated from the previous inspection.</p>	29 February 2024

Recommendation

- The registered person should have systems in place so that all staff, including agency staff and the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. This recommendation is repeated. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 61, paragraph 13.2)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC489212

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: MacIntyre Academies

Registered provider address: Seebeck House, 1 Seebeck Place, Knowlhill, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK5 8FR

Responsible individual: Andrew Moran

Manager: Sarah Nicholson

Inspector

Jennie Christopher, Social Care Inspector

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