

SC066897

Registered provider: cambian autism services limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home provides care for up to 28 children with learning disabilities. The home forms part of a residential school specialising in care, education and therapy for children with autism spectrum disorder.

At the time of the inspection, 27 children were living across the six houses.

The manager registered with Ofsted in July 2022.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Inspection dates: 11 to 13 March 2025

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| Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account | outstanding |
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| How well children and young people are helped and protected | outstanding |
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| The effectiveness of leaders and managers | outstanding |
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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: 14 November 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 14/11/2023 | Full | Outstanding |
| 09/02/2023 | Full | Good |
| 21/06/2021 | Full | Outstanding |
| 25/02/2020 | Full | Outstanding |

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Knowledgeable staff provide highly individualised care to the children. The extraordinary relationships between care, education and specialist staff mean that the children get the best possible care. Staff understand the children's complex needs and they step into the children's worlds allowing them to form trusting relationships. As a result, children are flourishing.

Staff expertly help the children broaden their diets. Staff have been creative in helping the children try new foods through a regular 'food explorers' club. This club provides opportunities for the children to try new foods each week informally. Staff use their trusted relationships and consistent approach with the children to support them. One child had a highly limited diet before moving into the home and after a very short period of time has increased the range of foods that they enjoy.

Children take part in meaningful experiences. Staff help the children to engage with local community projects such as volunteering work, achieving horticulture qualifications and completing the Duke of Edinburgh Awards. Staff are creative in their approach when helping the children to complete qualifications and awards. This helps build the children's confidence, self-esteem and increases their involvement in the local community.

Staff place the children's voices at the centre of their practice. Staff skilfully help the children to express their thoughts, feelings and wishes through specialist communication aids. The children take part in weekly 'house chats' and are actively involved in the running of the home. Staff involve the children in the development of their care plans including identifying 'clever actions' to help children calm when they are upset.

Staff prioritise the children's education. They all attend the school onsite and there is seamless interworking between the two settings. There is excellent communication and staff ensure that the children's education continues after school. The staff promote learning opportunities to develop the children's life skills. The children are making tremendous progress with skills for adulthood including making choices, folding clothing and going food shopping.

Staff have an extensive understanding of the children's complex health needs. Staff work creatively with health professionals to help the children attend medical appointments. They carefully prepare the children to reduce their worries about these appointments. Staff have helped the children have positive experiences when having immunisations, accessing dentists and having surgery and scans. Staff monitor the children's changeable health conditions and have a superb response when the children's health deteriorates.

Children's relationships with their families are valued and nurtured. Staff provide flexible support to the children and promote family time. They work very effectively with parents to ensure that they are full involved in their children's lives and also send weekly

postcards home. Parents are very complimentary of the support that children receive. Both staff and parents describe their relationships as 'like a family'.

The physical environment supports the children's needs. The children have personalised bedrooms which meet their individual needs and reflect their interests. Some areas in the homes are looking tired and need updating. However, this has not detracted from the children's overall experience.

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

The designated safeguarding lead promotes a strong safeguarding culture. They organise regular training for staff and provide ongoing updates about safeguarding practices. Managers have introduced 'in conversation' videos which are podcast style interviews with specialists to help the staff keep their knowledge up to date. Managers are open with the local authorities when concerns arise. There is a strong and open child-focused culture which continuously promotes the well-being of the highly vulnerable children in their care.

Staff are confident that managers will act on any concerns about the children or staff. Staff understand their roles in relation to safeguarding. When children have unexplained marks or injuries, these are taken very seriously, concerns are promptly shared with relevant agencies and advice followed. Managers ensure that any investigations are thorough and involve the child and their family appropriately. In one example, a child had been injured due to sleeping with some of their toys. Staff expertly helped the child to understand how to store their toys safely at nighttime. This involved the creation of a train station for their toy trains to sleep in at bedtime. This creative and child focused approach reduces risks for children.

Leaders have strong oversight of medication processes, and any errors are taken seriously. Errors are rare and quickly identified, and staff act promptly once they are discovered. Learning is always identified from any incidents and staff practice strengthened.

Skilled staff provide proactive support to the children when they become distressed. This support is guided by the 'nurture network' (a team of specialists) who oversee clear and child centred plans. When individual children are identified as needing more support, this is quickly provided. Staff only use physical interventions occasionally. Managers follow up promptly with the staff and children involved. There are well developed systems in place for learning lessons and improving practice which minimises the future need for physical intervention. Managers drive a caring culture amongst staff and the children to minimise blame and ensure that children and staff support each other positively.

Staff fully understand children's risks and vulnerabilities. Staff are creative in helping the children understand risks around them, including when they are online. Staff adapt resources and engage the children in activities to increase their understanding of risks.

Allegations are very rare. Managers take any concerns about staff practice very seriously. These concerns are discussed with partner agencies and investigated. Managers help the staff to understand how to improve their practice. There has been one isolated missed opportunity to share low level concerns with Local Authority Designated Officer about a member of staff. This has had no impact on the safety of the children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is highly experienced and working towards their qualification. They are supported by an experienced and passionate Responsible Individual. Together they work closely with each other to achieve their shared vision for the home and provide staff with strong leadership and guidance. They are both highly involved in the children's lives and deeply committed to ensuring that the children receive the best possible care.

Managers truly value their staff. Staff feel nurtured and their individual strengths are well used to improve the quality of care for the children. The managers are instrumental in the promotion of an inclusive culture resulting in the children being cared for by a diverse staff team.

Managers are relentless in their drive for improvement. They use well-developed monitoring systems to evaluate the effectiveness of the care provided. A new care handbook has been introduced to help staff understand their roles and responsibilities and to promote consistent practice. Managers have introduced 'home focused' meetings to further develop their monitoring and oversight of the quality of care for the children.

Staff say that they are well supported by managers. Managers make extra effort to get to know their staff and ensure that they are supported to flourish in their careers. Staff are well trained and are highly skilled in meeting the children's needs.

Good practice is shared widely. The 'nurture network' have delivered training about the language used when talking about children. There is an intentional focus on getting this right when describing children, their needs and the care provided to them. The staff have been involved in research to improve their understanding of the children's communication. The outcomes of this research have been embedded into practice with a significant positive impact on the children's well-being.

Staff have strong relationships with other professionals and parents who are unanimously positive about the care that the children receive. One social care professional said, 'The quality of care is second to none' and another said a child, 'Is achieving targets that would not have been thought achievable.' Communication with other professionals is excellent. Staff also capture and celebrate the children's progress in 'learning journeys' which are shared at the children's reviews. There have been no complaints. However, when parents provide feedback their views are responded to promptly and sensitively by managers.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the home environment is maintained to a high standard to provide a welcoming environment to children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.7)
- The registered person should ensure that the Local Authority Designated Officer is informed of all relevant previous practice concerns when discussing allegations made about staff. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 44, paragraph 9.18)

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: SC066897

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: cambian autism services limited

Registered provider address: Metropolitan House, 3 Darkes Lane, Potters Bar EN6 1AG

Responsible individual: Katherine Landells

Registered manager: Kirsty Marsden

Inspectors

Mark Dawkins, Social Care Inspector
Jacob Robson, Social Care Inspector
Kelly Marchmont, Social Care Inspector

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