

SC066897

Registered provider: Cambian Autism Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide care and accommodation, in six houses, for up to 28 children who have learning disabilities and/or sensory impairment. The home forms part of a residential school specialising in care, education and therapy for children who have autism spectrum disorder and associated behaviours. The manager registered with Ofsted in November 2018.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections on 17 March 2020.

Inspection dates: 21 to 22 June 2021

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 **good**

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: 25 February 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/02/2020	Full	Outstanding
22/01/2019	Full	Outstanding
21/06/2017	Full	Outstanding
03/01/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children continue to make excellent progress and, for some children, this has been life changing. Among a vast range of achievements, children are now able to communicate with parents and staff, access the community safely and with confidence, and undertake personal care tasks for themselves. Children are developing important life skills for their futures and are increasing in confidence and ability because of being at the home.

Children's views are actively sought and children are fully encouraged, and enabled, to have their say. Staff ensure that all children, irrespective of their communication needs, have a loud voice in the home. Complaints from children are rare and complaints from others likewise. Staff are alert to any subtle changes in the group dynamics and are very quick to respond should tensions between children arise.

The past few months, with the various lockdowns and restrictions on social contact, have not adversely affected the children. This is because staff have been creative in providing activities and maintaining a clear sense of expectation and routine in the home. This has meant that, for many children, life has remained largely unchanged, and their routines have continued to provide them with comfort, reassurance and stability.

All children continue to make excellent progress in their education. Despite periods of home-based schooling, and the consequent changes to routine, children have coped well. This can be attributed to the tenacious support from staff and great efforts taken to settle children into new education routines. Innovative approaches to learning have continued with the introduction of some new play-based therapy sessions, which support children in exploring their feelings. Children have also experienced new music-based activities, which have been thoroughly enjoyed.

Children enjoy a wide range of home-based activities and, when restrictions have allowed, access to the local and wider community. A social worker commented, 'Staff go out of their way to make things fun and interesting.' Children enjoy their activities with genuinely enthused, creative and passionate staff. Progress reports for children, many of which are captured in video and photographic form, show children thoroughly enjoying every aspect of their lives and making remarkable progress.

Children's individual needs are fully considered and provided for. Key religious events are celebrated, and children are, irrespective of their disability, supported to join in, have fun and learn about the world around them. The communicative needs of children are fully considered and, where necessary, specialist equipment is provided to support children with understanding and following their faith.

Children enjoy choosing their own activities with a new portal system. This has enabled children to exercise choice and further develop their confidence in making their own decisions. When older children are ready, they are supported to develop their readiness for adulthood in a safe and supportive way, for example, with helping to plan meals and completing some other household tasks. A social worker commented that a child is 'making leaps and bounds' in terms of developing independence and 'absolutely loves doing life skills work'.

Children's health is actively promoted, and medication arrangements are now exceptionally thorough. A new electronic system is in place, with manual backup systems if required, which is overseen by a dedicated and experienced individual. This means that any errors are quickly identified and rigorously investigated.

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

Children's safety is fully promoted, and there are rigorous and well-developed systems to protect children from harm. An extremely tenacious vice principal, well supported by the school's senior leadership team, ensures that safeguarding practice is exceptional.

The challenges of COVID-19 have been very well managed. All staff, across the whole site, are tested regularly in a dedicated on-site testing suite. Managers have ensured that there are clear procedures in place to manage situations when staff test positive, and these ensure that there is no impact on children. Similarly, children are supported with completing their own COVID-19 tests in specially adapted areas of the testing suite. This rigorous testing procedure, which is mandatory for all persons working in the home, ensures that children's health is fully protected from the effects of the virus.

Children's behaviour, where this becomes challenging to other children or staff, is very well managed. There have been significant decreases in the frequency and severity of incidents. This can be attributed to the research-based, nurturing approach now being used in the home. Individualised risk assessments and a dedicated staff team that knows each child very well ensure that risks are well managed. A parent commented that 'progress in behaviour has been amazing. Previous behaviours have dissipated.' Staff are sensitive, caring and highly effective in supporting children who may be distressed or needing help to access their routine or activity.

Children do not go missing from the home. There are clear protocols, understood by all staff and visitors, about the actions needed should this ever change. Children are supported because of high staffing ratios, which have, despite the challenges of COVID-19, been fully maintained. The staff team is largely unchanged, consistent and long serving. This gives a genuine sense of permanence and familiarity to children, which, in turn, supports children with feeling safe and secure. A parent said, 'I cannot praise them enough. They have been outstanding during the last year over lockdown.'

Staff recruitment processes are excellent, and all new staff are subject to appropriate checks prior to their employment starting. Induction processes for new staff are thorough. A dedicated administration manager ensures that all staff are suitably inducted prior to working with children in the home. Similarly, staff follow a comprehensive training plan, which focuses on a range of safeguarding risks to children including extremism, online safety and contextual safeguarding.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager will shortly be leaving the home. A new manager has been quickly appointed. During this transition period, there have been some indications that the previously excellent management systems need some improvement. On the first day of the inspection, there were some areas of the homes which required attention. For example, some bathrooms had aesthetic damage and needed cleaning. One kitchen cupboard needed replacing. The responsible individual, who was present throughout the inspection, ensured that these matters were immediately resolved.

The introduction of digital-based progress monitoring encapsulates the excellent progress that children make. The systems for monitoring safeguarding are exceptionally good. However, there are some areas of practice which are not consistently excellent, and this can be attributed to a lack of thorough review and monitoring systems. For example, a small proportion of care plans are not explicitly clear regarding religious need. A small number of risk management plans need reviewing to ensure that they provide staff with up-to-date guidance about managing children's behaviour.

The monthly independent visitor's reports do not always make clear that children's voices or views have been routinely captured. Staff are using overly technical language in restraint records. This means that children, parents and carers may not fully understand what has happened should they read these records either now or in the future. None of these developmental areas have, to date, led to any negative effect on children or their progress.

The management team has excellent relationships with key professionals. There is a sense of being one team, and senior leaders role model an inclusive approach. Research-based work continues with two universities, and this has led to improved practice in the home. This has resulted in the introduction of digital stories, which are used for children who are transitioning to their adult homes. Thorough analysis of children's progress means that leaders can evidence improvement and act where concerns arise. Furthermore, the learning that has been gained since the successful implementation of this work is being disseminated to other children's homes that provide a similar service.

All staff, including those from agencies, are fully supported through regular and detailed supervision. These sessions focus on the needs of children and staff's own professional development. Staff are also encouraged to explore their understanding

of key areas of practice. For example, staff are asked to research the regulations in relation to positive relationships and education. This approach to supervision ensures that staff are confident and knowledgeable about what is required in their roles. Staff in healthcare or therapeutic roles are offered appropriate clinical supervision.

Staff training is excellent. All staff are enrolled, where appropriate, on the required qualification pathway and are fully supported and tracked in their progress. The systems in place for wider staff training are also excellent. Staff can request bespoke training, and there are good systems in place to ensure that all staff are up to date with their continuing professional development. This results in a highly competent and motivated staff team that is equipped with the skills to meet the varied and complex needs of the children.

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 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>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.</p> <p>(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h))</p> <p>This specifically relates to ensuring that the home’s monitoring systems routinely, and rigorously, ensure that all aspects of the quality of care are monitored and reviewed.</p>	<p>31 August 2021</p>

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: James Gemmell

Inspectors

Pete Hylton, Regulatory Inspection Manager

Jill Sephton-Wright, Social Care Inspector

Matt Nicholls, Social Care Inspector

Mark Newington, Social Care Inspector

Kelly Marchmont, Social Care Compliance Inspector

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