

SC026910

Registered provider: Cambian Autism Services Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The children's home provides care for up to 68 children with autism spectrum disorders and/or learning disabilities. The service operates as a residential special school that also provides accommodation for 52 weeks of the year, therefore it is registered as a children's home. The home provides care across 11 houses. The home is owned by a private national organisation.

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

The manager registered with Ofsted on 1 March 2016.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspection on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 15 and 16 October 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 March 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **requires improvement to be good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **requires improvement to be good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **requires improvement to be good**

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 4 December 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/12/2019	Interim	Improved effectiveness
28/05/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
22/10/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good
07/03/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

The restrictions and difficulties arising from the COVID-19 pandemic have had a negative impact on the staffing provision and children's experiences in the home.

For example, children's opportunities to engage in a broad range of activities have been restricted. The site has a wealth of resources, including a swimming pool, trampoline and a rock-climbing wall, which would provide children with meaningful and healthy activities. However, insufficient staff are trained to facilitate these activities, meaning opportunities for children to take advantage of these facilities are limited. Day to day activities outside the home are often limited to going for a walk, shopping at the local supermarket and going for a ride on the bus. Visits to local attractions and seasonal festivities usually take place termly.

Children are not always provided with continuity of care from adults who know them well. This is because a significant number of staff have left. As a result, leaders and managers rely on agency staff to fill vacancies and ensure that children have the right number of staff caring for them. Leaders and managers are aware of this ongoing concern; they have worked shifts themselves and requested temporary staff work the same shift pattern to try to improve the consistency for children.

Improvements to children's accommodation mean that children live in homes that are well resourced, personalised and homely. In the main, children have access to toys and games that they like. However, further consideration is needed to ensure that these resources help to extend children's interests and broaden their talents.

Feedback received from parents and social workers is mixed. Many recognise the support and kind care the children receive and the achievements they have made. However, some social workers said that there are delays in their receiving incident reports, and they have concerns about the high staff turnover. Similarly, some parents are concerned about the lack of regular communication about their child's progress and engagement. They also expressed concern that children's routines are not well maintained because of the number of staff leaving. Many parents also commented on the lack of community activities for children.

Children are regularly consulted with; staff help them to give their views about the care they receive and whether they feel safe in the home. Good use is made of social stories to help children to communicate their views and understand their routines.

Managers adapt the children's guide to the home according to the stage of the child's time at the home. Guides for children who are moving into the home include questions about what children would like to have in their room and what colour they would like their wall painted. Guides are child-friendly and colourful.

All children living at this home attend the on-site education provision. Where needed, care staff support children with their education.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Children are relaxed in their environment; they confidently communicate to staff if they are feeling anxious or worried. The care staff respond appropriately, giving the children the support and reassurance they need. Permanent staff know the children well; they recognise and report concerns appropriately to the safeguarding team. The registered manager correctly escalates these concerns to safeguarding agencies when necessary.

When children are at risk of harm, staff have held them to keep them safe. These interventions are for a short period of time and not used excessively. Incident records are now of better quality and provide information about staff's actions to help children. However, debriefs of children and staff following an incident are not effective. Staff involved in incidents often complete the debrief with children. This does not provide children with an opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings about being held with someone independent of the incident. In addition, discussions with staff lack reflection and do not include opportunities to explore what could be done differently to prevent the incident happening again. Managers monitor incidents but their oversight lacks critical analysis.

Restrictive practices, including environmental restrictions, are reducing. Leaders and managers regularly review if restrictions, such as monitoring devices, can be removed and/or whether they are necessary to keep children safe. Risks are recognised and in the main, managed well. Despite this, not all children's documents include all the information staff know about children's behaviour and the known risks.

Appropriate action has been taken in response to child protection concerns. Safeguarding records are well maintained and detailed. However, organisational protocols and processes have resulted in delays in concluding management investigations into safeguarding concerns. The registered manager has appropriately challenged this, and more staff have now been trained to complete investigations.

Children are looked after by adults who have been through an appropriate safer recruitment process. Recruitment records are well maintained and provide a detailed audit trail of the checks completed.

Leaders and managers have positive links with healthcare professionals and parents to ensure that children's health needs are met. Medication errors have occurred. Action taken in response has resulted in valuable learning that has subsequently led to a reduction in further medication errors.

Appropriate action is taken when complaints are raised. Records are well maintained, detailing the actions taken, the outcome and whether the complainant is happy with the conclusion.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

A new principal in post. He is working closely with the registered manager to address weaknesses in the children's home provision. Together, they have worked hard to improve the quality of the living environment. In addition, many of the shortfalls identified at this inspection had already been included in the home's improvement plan.

Clearly recorded governance meetings demonstrate the oversight that the senior management team has of the home. Issues with staff vacancies and retention are noted and included in the workforce development plan. However, the plan to improve the situation lacks clear actions and does not include information gained from staff who have left.

Care staff enjoy working in the home. They feel supported by approachable managers and receive good-quality supervision and team meetings that aid their development. Agency staff also receive supervision; however, there are gaps in the frequency of these sessions.

Opportunities for staff to receive training in person have been limited due to the pandemic. Staff told inspectors that they do not like the online training they have received as it does not meet their learning styles. The manager has identified that staff need additional training in autism spectrum disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and supporting personal care. In addition, not all staff have completed the practical element of restraint training. Plans are in place to provide this training.

Improvements in the accuracy of staffing records are required. The manager has identified that rotas do not always reflect who has actually worked.

Independent monitoring is effective. Leaders and managers have considered the independent person's recommendations and findings from previous inspections and incorporated the learning from these within the home's development plan. This plan is being implemented effectively.

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 enjoyment and achievement standard is that children take part in and benefit from a variety of activities that meet their needs and develop and reflect their creative, cultural, intellectual, physical and social interests and skills.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff help each child to—</p> <p>develop the child’s interests and hobbies;</p> <p>participate in activities that the child enjoys and which meet and expand the child’s interests and preferences; and make a positive contribution to the home and the wider community; and</p> <p>that each child has access to a range of activities that enable the child to pursue the child’s interests and hobbies. (Regulation 9 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(b))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that staffing shortages do not affect children’s opportunities to enjoy meaningful and enjoyable activities in the community. In addition, ensure that staff are provided with training so that children can use the in-house activities on site.</p>	21 April 2022
<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>	21 April 2022

<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 have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child;</p> <p>understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home;</p> <p>demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on—</p> <p>research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met.</p> <p>(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(d)(f)(g)(i))</p> <p>In particular, the registered person should ensure that investigations are concluded in a timely manner and that all staff are up to date with basic and mandatory training.</p>	
<p>The registered person must ensure that the employment of any person on a temporary basis at the children's home does not prevent children from receiving such continuity of care as is reasonable to meet their needs.</p> <p>(Regulation 31 (1))</p>	21 April 2022
<p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes—</p> <p>the name of the child;</p> <p>details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure;</p> <p>the date, time and location of the use of the measure;</p> <p>a description of the measure and its duration;</p>	21 April 2022

details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure;

the name of the person who used the measure (“the user”), and of any other person present when the measure was used;

the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and

a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure;

within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so (“the authorised person”)—

has spoken to the user about the measure; and

has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and

within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure.

(Regulation 35 (3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)(iv))

In particular, the registered person should ensure that all staff and children are spoken to following incidents to gain the views, thoughts and feelings of the child and staff are provided with an opportunity to reflect on their practice.

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: SC026910

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: Cambian Autism Services Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Daniel Pitt

Registered manager: Kerry Byron

Inspectors

Sharron Escott, Social Care Inspector
Clare Nixson, Social Care Inspector
Wendy Anderson, Social Care Inspector

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