

SC464630

Registered provider: Aspirations Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is part of a national organisation which operates services for children and adults. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two children or young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 12 to 13 September 2017

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: 8 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None.

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- There are very good relationships between the children and the staff. The staff provide nurturing, dedicated care. This helps children to feel secure in the home. As a result, children make good progress.
- The staff work hard to promote the children's education. When children are unable to attend school, the staff identify other educational resources for them. The children enjoy attending alternative education, and make good progress.
- The manager and staff record the children's healthcare needs very well. They enable children to attend stressful appointments. The staff remain with children, as any good parent would, during hospital stays.
- The staff facilitate good-quality, regular contact between children and their families. This helps the children to remain in touch with those who are important to them, and helps them to prepare for a possible return home.
- The home now has a qualified, experienced registered manager. The staff receive good-quality support, training and professional development.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Since the last inspection, the registered manager has had to deal with a very difficult and dangerous situation involving a resident who has now left. This resulted in some staff leaving. Since then, the manager has been asked to admit children whose needs cannot be met within the home's conditions of registration. Although she has resisted these requests, it appears that the company is not scrutinising these referrals adequately.
- The terminology used for staff in the home's development plan, 'therapeutic care workers', is misleading. They do not have qualifications in therapy.
- The company's present staffing policy of moving staff between different homes has the potential to badly affect staff morale as well as the continuity of care.
- The home's placement-planning documentation is unnecessarily complicated. This complexity makes it difficult for children or staff who are new to the home to understand the large array of documents.
- Protocols for the administration of medicines need to be strengthened.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/02/2017	Full	Requires improvement
06/04/2016	Interim	Not judged
01/12/2015	Full	Requires improvement
11/08/2015	Full	Inadequate

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>13: 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 helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to 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, and ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child.</p> <p>This is with particular reference to the need for the registered person to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ propose for admission only those children and young people whose needs match the home's conditions of registration ■ ensure that staff roles are described accurately in the home's development plan ■ ensure that staffing policies promote continuity of care for each child ■ keep the home's placement-planning documentation under review to make it simpler for children and staff to understand. (Regulation 13(1)(2)(a)(e)) 	<p>31/10/2017</p>

Recommendation:

- Ensure that records are kept of each administration of all medication, which includes occasions when the medicine is refused. In particular, ensure that when controlled drugs are administered to children, that when two staff are available, they both sign each entry in the controlled drugs book. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The children in this home receive good-quality, nurturing care. The manager has created an ethos of warmth and acceptance.

The staff support the children with clear boundaries and expectations regarding their behaviour. As a result, the children are learning to accept responsibility for their actions. They can now talk about their feelings when upset.

Both children received a sensitive introduction to the home. One child moved in six months ago. She has made very good progress in all areas since her arrival. For example, this child used to be involved in many serious incidents that required police involvement. She is now much better able to manage her behaviour and the number of incidents has reduced considerably.

Both children attend alternative education every day, and are making good progress.

The registered manager and her staff develop good relationships with children. They are keen to promote positive contact between children and their families. For some children, this has been an important step towards a possible return to their family home. The staff welcome parents to the home and include them in activities. This helps to build positive relationships and good communication.

The staff make sure that children's healthcare needs are well recorded. This ensures that the staff understand any specific conditions. They recently supported one child very well when she had to have hospital treatment. This child had anxieties about medical procedures, but, by staying with her, the staff enabled her to receive the treatment that she needed.

In response to a requirement from the last inspection, the registered manager took assertive action to improve the children's diets. The children now receive a good, healthy diet. Children explained that they choose the foods they wish to eat. They enjoy helping with the cooking, and showed the inspector how to make popcorn.

The children are consulted about all aspects of their care. They receive frequent individual sessions with their key workers. These conversations are often related to their personal targets. They are recorded well, so that the manager and other staff are aware of the work that their colleagues have done.

The children are also offered a regular house meeting. They do not always find these meetings easy. One member of staff decided that it would be more relaxing to speak with the child during a car journey. The child responded well to this approach.

The children appear to be happy and settled in the home. The registered manager encourages her staff to establish boundaries and a structured, calming bedtime routine.

This includes providing toys for the bath, and helping children to wash their hair. The staff read bedtime stories to the children to help them to settle at night.

The children enjoy a range of fun activities with staff. They also engage in a wide variety of activities as part of their education. Some activities, such as barbecues in the garden, include their parents. Some children have photograph albums to help them to remember, in years to come, the fun they have had in the home.

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

The children in this home are kept safe from harm. The home has clear and detailed risk assessments on individual children. The requirement made at the last inspection regarding risk assessments is now met. The manager makes sure that activity risk assessments contain sufficient detail.

Children are encouraged to try activities which involve some degree of managed risk. For example, one child goes riding. As well as providing healthy exercise, this is helping the child to develop relationships by learning to communicate with the horse. This helps to build self-confidence.

Children's risk assessments do not routinely include bullying. This is because, initially, one child was on her own in the home. Now that there are two children, bullying must be considered. The registered manager agreed to amend the risk assessments. They are regularly updated and otherwise of a good standard.

Fire safety and other health and safety checks are now managed well. This was the subject of a requirement at the last full inspection, so this area has improved.

The home has a safe system of staff recruitment. The human resources team makes sure that staff files are audited well. Any missing documentation is followed up and risk assessments are carried out on all new staff.

There has been only one recent incident when children went missing. This took place soon after the second child arrived in the home. The children ran off together. The staff searched for the children, but, although they could hear them, they could not find them. The staff acted correctly and alerted the police, but they did not accompany the one child who was subsequently taken to the police station.

One child seems to have learned from this experience already. When another incident took place and her peer urged her to run away, she made a good decision to follow the staff's advice and go to her room.

The staff set very clear boundaries for the children. These are supported by sensible, fair consequences and rewards. The registered manager reviews all of these measures. If they are not effective, she advises her staff to change tactics.

There have been very few restraints in the home. The intensity and duration of

restraints has also reduced, which is very positive.

Staff receive training and guidance on what to do if they are concerned about a child's welfare and safety. For example, staff members were able to explain what action they would take if a child were to make a disclosure of abuse. The home has not had the need to refer any children to the local authority's designated officer.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home had no registered manager between November 2014 and August 2017. The present manager oversaw the home's refurbishment and built a staff team. The home accepted a young person, who was living there at the time of the last full inspection in February 2017.

Some staff left due to the risks involved in looking after this young man. The manager recognised that neither he nor the staff could be kept safe. This young person's placement ended in March 2017. He showed escalating behaviour which was far beyond the scope of the staff's experience.

Since then, the registered manager has challenged some placement referrals. She understands the home's conditions of registration. For example, the home is not registered to work with young people who have acute mental health needs. It is of concern that the company's referral system did not screen out such referrals before asking the registered manager to consider these young people for admission. The registered manager has made good decisions in this regard. Although it is early days, the present mix of children has been risk-assessed well, and is largely positive.

After a difficult period with the previous young person, resulting in some staff deciding to leave, the manager rebuilt her team. She successfully applied to Ofsted for registration.

The registered manager is an experienced childcare professional. She is qualified and skilled in her role.

The registered manager understands the difficulties that children face when they have experienced past trauma. Rigorous monitoring helps her to identify areas where each child has improved. She weighs up information carefully, and is decisive. She is also ambitious for the home.

The registered manager provides good-quality, regular supervision to support her staff. She is keen to continue with her own professional development, and values the regular input from the home's residential services consultant. The staff also find these consultations helpful in suggesting new ideas. They say that this has made a positive difference to their practice.

The home's induction and training programmes are also good. Staff say that their

training on trauma and attachment was particularly helpful to their work.

The registered manager is well aware of the home's strengths and areas for development. All the requirements and recommendations from the last inspection have been acted upon.

The registered manager has developed positive relationships with other professionals. For example, a police officer visited one of the children during the inspection to talk about a recent incident.

Social workers and other professionals contribute their views through regular surveys. Social workers commented on the home's good-quality communication.

The home has a detailed statement of purpose. This document has been updated since the interim inspection, and provides a useful guide to the services offered.

The majority of shortfalls found on this inspection lay within the remit of the company rather than this individual home. For example, staff are not officially assigned to specific homes. The registered manager of this home has ensured that her team is stable and she would resist them being moved to other services. However, some of her staff are worried that they may be asked to work a long way from home at short notice. This has had an impact on staff retention. As a result, the home will lose an experienced and valued member of staff who the children like and respect.

Present human resources policies do not provide children and young people with continuity of care. The company moves staff around between homes, even when they are still new to the job. Contrary to the intention, this is not helpful in building their confidence and skills. The effect on the children and young people is not noticeably different from that of using agency staff.

The staff have insufficient time to get to know the young people or their colleagues before being placed in difficult situations. The home's very complicated placement-planning documents are difficult for new staff to grasp quickly. This is an area of vulnerability for the organisation, and for each individual home. Some staff said how relieved they were to be at this home, in a stable environment.

The home's development plan makes reference to the staff being 'therapeutic workers'. It is important to be accurate when describing the staff's training and skills. This home provides good-quality parenting, which is informed by attachment and trauma theory, but does not provide therapy. Misleading terms may attract referrals of young people who need a therapeutic service. A requirement has been made to encompass the four areas of weakness described above.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC464630

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Aspirations Care Limited

Registered provider address: 5a Hare Lane, Gloucester GL1 2BA

Responsible individual: Christine Cameron

Registered manager: Melanie Grace

Inspector

Heather Chaplin: social care inspector

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