

2647163

Registered provider: Ascent Fostering Agency

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned home provides care for up to five children with social and emotional difficulties.

The home and the manager were registered with Ofsted in December 2021.

There were four children living at the home at the time of this inspection.

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 July 2024

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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: 8 August 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 08/08/2023 | Full | Outstanding |
| 01/11/2022 | Full | Good |

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children are making excellent progress from their starting points in all aspects of their lives. Staff and children create a home with a strong emphasis on family values. Children are happy. They take part in activities and holidays together and develop trusting relationships with staff and each other.

Children's emotional needs are met well. The home uses a therapeutic approach to care which is successful in supporting children's progress. Children say that they always have someone to talk to and said that staff 'actually care'. This includes the in-house therapist and other members of the staff team that they know well.

Staff encourage children to embrace their talents and hobbies. Staff and children regularly celebrate achievements together and with enthusiasm.

Children are supported and empowered to take ownership of their care plans and daily lives. Children's wishes and feelings are consistently sought and recorded in their case records. They are also captured at the house 'community meetings' and in the children's newsletter. Children are involved in the running of their home. This includes children playing an active role in staff recruitment, being 'child champions' for safeguarding and participating in youth engagement panels for the organisation.

Children respond well to the boundaries and structure that staff provide. This gives them security and stability and has helped them to settle in the home.

Staff work hard to ensure that children spend time with those people who are important to them. Therapeutic support is available to family members to strengthen these relationships. One parent said the home's approach to family time with their child has helped to improve their relationship. The child said, 'It's the best it's ever been.' The therapeutic ethos and team around the child approach results in positive outcomes, with some children being able to return to their families or previous foster carers.

Staff work hard to ensure that all children attend education. One child has successfully taken their GCSEs and secured a place in sixth form college. Staff support children sensitively if they feel anxious about going into school. They work closely with education professionals to improve children's experiences. One education professional said that the collaborative work with the home's staff has resulted in positive progress and improved attendance for one child. They said, 'The child is now willing to communicate difficult conversations rather than shutting down.' This has helped the child remain in school.

Children have high aspirations for their futures. One child is being supported by the staff and organisation to develop their own small business, with support to write a business plan as well as some financial support. Children and staff have developed a music studio, and children are now producing and writing their own music.

Children learn important life skills. One child has been successful in getting a part-time job, following support from staff with compiling their CV. Following consultation with stakeholders regarding independence skills, the staff team has introduced individual independence plans. The plans help children to identify their individual goals to develop their independent living skills.

The home is kept to a good standard and has a cosy family feel. However, the carpets upstairs are tired and are due to be replaced and the upper area of the back garden is overgrown.

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

Safeguarding practice in the home is strong. Children are listened to by staff who know them well. Staff are attuned to children's behaviours and intervene sensitively when children present with anxieties or concerns. This helps to reduce children's worries, resulting in reduced incidents of negative behaviour. When incidents occur, children and staff are given space to reflect on what has happened, which informs children's plans and behavioural management strategies.

Leaders and managers ensure that safeguarding practices are consistently applied across the team. Staff are well trained in de-escalation techniques and behaviour management is a strength. Staff understand safeguarding processes well.

Physical intervention rarely happens at this home. On the one occasion it was used, the hold was minimal, appropriate and used safely.

Risk assessments for children demonstrate a clear understanding of their individual risks. They are detailed and regularly updated.

Incentives and rewards are effective in promoting positive behaviour. If consequences are used, they are restorative and help children to reflect on their behaviour, talk to the staff and learn from their mistakes.

Staff engage in discussions with children about risks. They provide support and guidance about staying safe, both within and outside the home. One of the children is the 'children's safeguarding champion' who advises other children about boundaries and consequences. Workshops are delivered with children at house meetings covering relevant topics such as gang crime, street doctors and online safety.

Staff are proactive when children are missing from the home and stay in contact with them. Staff follow the agreed missing-from-home protocols. They are keen to understand from the children the reasons behind their absences, by having focused discussions following incidents of going missing.

Leaders, managers and staff take allegations and safeguarding matters seriously. They follow the home's allegation and safeguarding procedures. Children know how to make a complaint and managers respond quickly to any concerns.

Feedback from children's professional networks is positive. They have no safeguarding concerns.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders and managers are highly aspirational for children, the home and staff.

The registered manager has comprehensive internal monitoring trackers in place and has excellent oversight of the home. Monitoring is detailed and focuses on what is important to children.

Leaders and managers regularly seek the views of external stakeholders, both formally and informally. Formal consultations take place with local authorities to inform the development of new policies, procedures and strategies.

Children's records and management reports consistently reflect children's lived experiences. They have a strong emphasis on the individual child, their views and their personality. Children's records show their achievements and identify areas for development and growth.

Staff enjoy their work. They say that they feel highly supported, they receive regular supervision and regularly attend team meetings. Staff receive regular reflective sessions facilitated by the in-house therapist. This supports staff to understand the needs of children and supports staff's resilience.

Staff feedback is overwhelmingly positive. One member of staff said that working at the home has been a 'profoundly rewarding experience. There is a positive framework and ethos that underpins our daily activities, spotlighting the importance of dedicating full attention, effort and support to every child in our care.'

The registered manager has introduced in-house traineeships for talented staff to enable them to progress into senior and management roles. The programme is robust and focuses on the therapeutic practice of this home.

Staff are qualified and highly skilled. In addition to mandatory training, staff are offered additional courses such as training in house in therapeutic parenting and externally in contextual safeguarding training. This ensures that staff continue to learn and develop to be able to meet the children's needs well.

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

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that the home remains a nurturing and supportive environment by replacing the upstairs carpet and tidying up the overgrown upper part of the garden. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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: 2647163

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Ascent Fostering Agency

Registered provider address: Ascent Fostering Agency, Suite 5, 1st Floor Hillcrest House, 51 Woodcote Road, Wallington, Surrey SM6 0LT

Responsible individual: Mr Mark Pomell

Registered manager: Michelle Pryce-Morally

Inspector

Amanda Burrows, Social Care Inspector

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