

# SC026910

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 owned by a private national organisation and can provide care for up to 47 children with autism and/or learning disabilities. The home operates as a residential special school. The home currently provides care for 13 children across four houses on the same site as the school. The inspectors only inspected the social care provision.

### Inspection dates: 16 to 18 September 2024

**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:** 16 May 2023

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** requires improvement to be good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>Inspection type</b>	<b>Inspection judgement</b>
16/05/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
26/09/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
21/06/2022	Full	Inadequate
01/03/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good

## Inspection judgements

### Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Inspectors spent two evenings with children. Inspectors met all children, speaking with some and spending time with others.

Children receive care from staff who know and understand them well. Staff spend time with children, planning meaningful activities. Children enjoy trips to the safari park and adventure centre, and one child went to a music festival. Children spend time with each other but also go on trips linked to their specific interests. Staff take photos of the experiences, and together, they create memory books. On site, children have access to a range of opportunities, such as the swimming pool, bouncy castle and walks in the grounds.

Staff help children to make progress. Staff identify clear and achievable targets that are reviewed regularly. These are specific to individuals. For some children, this might be making steps towards being able to get dressed independently. For others, it might be trying new food. The clarity of goals and systems to review means that children make meaningful progress. There has been a specific focus on developing one child's experiences. This child previously did not leave the school site. However, a clear plan and consistent approach have now opened this child's world.

Staff use social stories consistently well with children. This helps to explain things to children and give them choices. Children have a say about the activities they do and how their home is developed. Staff create personalised children's guides for each child. These reflect their interests and tell them who is there to support them. Staff support children to attend and participate in their review meetings.

Managers plan well for new children moving into the home. Children who have recently moved in have previously struggled to attend school. Through planning the move in well and setting clear expectations and boundaries, these children are now attending school.

Parents speak positively about the home. They say staff know their children well and build positive relationships with them. They get told about important things that happen in their child's life. One parent shared that the consistency and stability of support given to their child have improved the quality time they can spend together.

Changes and improvements are being made to the environment. One house has new furnishings, with orders in place for the rest of the houses. A new kitchen is being fitted in one house. A house that is not currently occupied has extensive building renovations taking place. There is an ongoing programme of work to ensure the environment in all houses is homely.

Leaders recognise that there are currently limitations to children's evenings as a result of staffing patterns. Currently, most children start to prepare for bedtime at similar times regardless of age, and it is not clear that this is linked to individual need. A new pattern of working hours is in staff contracts but is not yet being used.

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

Staff take action to keep children safe. They are clear about the actions they should take when there are safeguarding concerns and the timescale they should report these in. Staff report concerns about practice or unexplained marks to the home's safeguarding leads. Leaders track and monitor safeguarding concerns. This allows them to identify patterns and trends. Concerns are swiftly investigated, including timely conversations with staff to find out further information.

One child has raised several concerns about staff practice to support them, including that they have been harmed. There have been sufficient staff present to know that this has not happened. However, there is limited monitoring and tracking of these concerns. As such, further learning about these incidents is limited.

Staff use physical restraint to keep children and staff safe from harm. Managers review incidents at an initial stage to identify further action, and they then provide a final review and summary after reflecting on the incident with staff. Some of these reflections are not sufficiently in depth to explore the issues fully. The registered manager reviews and evaluates the use of restraint within the home and for specific children. This leads to further, more detailed reviews of the child when concerns are identified.

Managers support staff to use a model of reflection to better understand children's behaviour and how to support them. This encourages a consideration of what has happened and why, as well as how to avoid the same happening in the future.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

This home has a history of poor inspection outcomes over the last seven years. Leaders and managers have transformed the home in a planned and measured way, focusing on understanding and improving the experiences and progress for children. The registered manager uses multiple new systems to review and understand care. These are well planned and well thought through. By embedding these into daily practice, they become sustainable for staff.

Staff are positive about working in the home. They comment on the progressive changes seen in the last year impacting on the culture and environment. They feel supported by their managers and reassured by the consistent presence of the registered manager. Staff spend less time supporting children in school. This means they have time for training and development opportunities and to properly plan and review the care they give to children. Staff are increasingly confident in their role.

This allows them to be more ambitious to try new things and see what they can help children to achieve.

Staff receive regular supervision. When important information needs to be shared to provide consistent approaches, this is done well. However, it is not always clear how staff respond to discussions and challenge. It is not always clear that supervision offers staff the space to reflect on their practice. Managers support staff to understand the therapeutic parenting approach used in the home. This is in the early stages and is not consistently used. Its application to individual children's needs is not in place, and there are missed opportunities for managers to be mindful of developing this when reviewing records or in supervision meetings.

The registered manager has started to explore with staff ways to write about children that are more child-friendly. There has been varying success with this. Many plans still contain language that does not provide detail or clarity about children's experiences, reducing the helpfulness of documents. This work remains in progress.

Leaders have welcomed support offered by the local authority to improve the home. Oversight from them has been in depth and appropriately challenging. Leaders have recognised that scrutiny from their independent person has not provided the depth of challenge they require, and a change has been made.

Professionals are positive about the progress their children make and the positive working relationships they develop with staff.

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

### Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that there is a clear record to track and monitor allegations made, even when there are witnesses to refute them. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 44, paragraph 9.17)
- The registered person should continue to review practices, such as bedtimes and language used, to create more individualised care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.21)
- The registered person should ensure there is consistent and robust professional challenge after incidents when speaking with staff. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.36)
- The registered person should ensure the staff understand, apply and embed the use of their therapeutic parenting model. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.4)
- The registered person should ensure supervision records reflect the opportunities staff get for discussion. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- The registered person should ensure they continue to improve the home environment. ('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:** SC026910

**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:** Melissa McCarthy

**Registered manager:** Kerry Byron

## Inspectors

Clare Nixson, Social Care Inspector  
Katie Ratcliffe, Social Care Inspector

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