

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC409502
Inspector	Rosemary Dancer
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Bedford Borough Council
Registered person address	Bedford Borough Council, Borough Hall Cauldwell Street BEDFORD MK42 9AP
Responsible individual	Tara Geere
Registered manager	Joyce Margaret Ward
Date of last inspection	23/01/2014

Inspection date	19/09/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	outstanding
Quality of care	outstanding
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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Children make excellent progress in all aspects of their lives as a result of them coming to stay in the home. They are exceptionally well supported by staff and the manager who know and understand them and their needs well. Care planning is underpinned by comprehensive care plans and excellent partnership working with parents and other agencies and professionals.

Children really enjoy going to stay in the home. They are provided with new opportunities and from these develop skills. Some children have developed skills beyond all expectations; this is impressive. From this their self-esteem and confidence grows exceptionally well and some learn to be far more assertive. Children are safe and they develop trusting relationships with staff. Staff manage unsafe situations effectively.

Practice in the home is supported by strong leadership and management arrangements. The effective arrangements for monitoring the quality of care ensure that this is a home that has a clear focus on improvement.

Three shortfalls were found. These have no impact on children. In the Statement of Purpose the details of the responsible individual are out of date; over the summer period some staff did not have supervision in line with the home's policy; the staff

recruitment records are not easily accessible for the manager to audit and social work teams do not always provide updated paperwork in a timely way.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a local authority and provides care and accommodation for up to five children with physical disabilities, learning disabilities and sensory impairment. Three children can be accommodated under short break arrangements, one young person can be accommodated as a permanent placement and one young person can be accommodated under a shared care arrangement.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/01/2014	Interim	good progress
23/05/2013	Full	good
03/01/2013	Interim	good progress
17/07/2012	Full	good

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
5 (2001)	revise the statement of purpose. This is with specific reference to ensuring the details of the responsible individual are correct. (Regulation 5 (a))	17/10/2014

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure the children's home has a record of the recruitment and vetting checks which have been carried out on those working for the children's home to enable the manager to carry out periodical audits of the recruitment processes (NMS 16.3)
- ensure that staff are supported through regular supervision at the frequency stated in the supervision policy (NMS19.4)
- ensure the result of all statutory reviews and reviews of placement plans are recorded on each child's file; with specific reference to continuing to request the information from the responsible social work department. (NMS 25.8)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **outstanding**

Children make exceptional progress in all areas of their life as a direct result of the part that their short break or longer stay plays in their care planning.

They make, as appropriate to their age and level of understanding, significant improvements in their communication skills. This means that they are more able to make their views known in appropriate ways. This impacts extremely positively on their self-esteem and confidence and makes sure that they feel their views are valued. A parent said their child's communication skills have improved so much since staying in the home.

Young people moving in to have stays in the home settle in very well very quickly and begin to benefit from their stays. A young person said, 'I love going to XX House.' Young people's understanding of why they are at the home has grown and it is clear that they feel very safe, secure and cared for. Some children have made remarkable progress in this respect and for some families the stays and support provided has enabled them to care for their child more effectively.

Young people are healthy because staff know and understand how to deal with their, often, complex health needs. A consultant remarked of one child that her progress had been 'remarkable.'

Young people's independence is maximised. While some children's progress may seem small, when considering their needs, they are actually massive developments. For others their growth and development, as a result of living in the home, has meant that they have had very successful moves into services providing care to young adults. They have embraced this as an excellent opportunity for their future.

Young people's engagement in activities widens their outlook on life and helps them to develop confidence in their abilities; this confidence spurs them on to try new experiences and develop new skills that previously were not thought possible. Young people make a very positive contribution to the home. They develop strong friendships. They develop skills and knowledge that will help them in their future lives, for example growing and tending vegetables in the garden. They also enjoy eating the end result. They also contribute to the wider community. For example, the home has arranged for children to choose animals at a zoo they would like to adopt. This means that they develop a sense of their responsibility towards others.

Quality of care **outstanding**

Young people develop excellent relationships with staff. A parent stated their child was, 'unable to vocalise but we can tell how happy she feels about the staff by the way she responds when we talk about them.' They also develop very useful relationships with peers that help them to learn about relationships and friendships. Staff are totally child centred, hold their well-being as paramount and have very high aspirations for the children in their care. All children confirmed that in their view the home is great and a parent commented, 'extremely caring staff, fun, happy atmosphere created for the children.'

Children's increase in self-esteem and confidence mean that they are more able to assert their feelings and make their wishes known. Children's wishes and feelings are seen as paramount and are seen as central to the development of the service. Their views are listened to and met, where appropriate.

Behaviour is especially well managed by staff who have an exceptional understanding of children's individual needs and the impact their disability or other disadvantage has on their emotional well-being and behaviour. A parent said, 'they speak clearly, softly and kindly to my daughter which is perfect.'

There are high quality, individualised care plans that cover all needs including those related to each child's disability, culture and background. These support staff in ensuring that clear, measurable objectives and aims are developed for each child based on their abilities. Each achievement, however small, is celebrated by staff. This means children's self-esteem and confidence increases and this in turn encourages them to grow and develop further, for some in ways that were never thought possible. The staff pay excellent regard to ensuring children's full participation in life in the home and in any other areas of their lives. The staff successfully challenge any barriers to children's participation in an effective way.

Parents said they are made to feel welcome when visiting the home. A parent said, 'I have a great relationship with all staff at XX House.' The impact of these relationships is that there is excellent partnership working with parents so support is given to children to help them grow and develop and they reach their full potential. The working relationships with other professionals and agencies are also excellent. There is a team around the child approach taken that ensures that there is a high level of consistent care provided across settings. This provides children with the certainty they require to grow and develop into confident young adults. Professionals remarked on the excellent communication the home has with them and how staff always make very useful contributions to meetings about a child. They also remarked on how this ensured consistency of care across settings.

Parents unanimously felt that the service is a life line to them, their child and their family. A parent stated, 'care offered is consistent which is very important to my child. She knows exactly who is going to be there looking after her and we receive regular breaks at the home which helps me spend as much time with siblings and re-charge my batteries to let me continue to care for my child at home.' Another stated,

'my daughter is so well cared for at XX House that I enjoy complete peace of mind while she is there.'

Children's learning is supported well by staff who have excellent links to schools. Children's learning extends to their stays in the home. Children confirmed that they get help from staff with their school work. There is an impressive range of activities provided to them in house and in the community. Children's wishes and developmental needs are considered in the choice of activities to ensure that their interests are taken into account. They are also given opportunities to try new and exciting things and develop new skills; activities are also totally grounded in children having fun while learning. A parent said the home is, 'full of fun and laughter making it a very happy place for my child to spend time at.'

Children's health needs are catered for exceptionally well by staff who are well trained and very astute in recognising that subtle changes in their demeanour may be due to a health or emotional need emerging. All children feel that staff look after them well if they are unwell.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Children feel safe and are safe during their time in the home. They are supported to understand, in an appropriate way, how to keep themselves safe. Children confirmed that they have someone to talk to if they feel sad.

The management of behaviour is effective in achieving change and this is, in the main, done through reinforcing positive behaviour. Sanctions and restraints are not used and this reflects that staff are skilled in de-escalation techniques. Children indicate they understand the rules.

Staff have a good awareness about each individual child's vulnerabilities and of any vulnerabilities which may cause difficulties when considering the grouping of children who have stays together. There are clear risk assessments with clear strategies to minimise risks to children; these are updated as required. Staff follow the risk assessments and this ensures that children's safety and well-being is assured.

Safeguarding issues are dealt with appropriately and referred to the relevant agencies, the home works proactively with parents and other agencies when a child is subject to a child protection plan, for example. Staff members show a good awareness about action to take should they have a concern about a young person.

Bullying is not an issue in this home in the formal sense, but staff are aware of the potential for incidents between children and take action to minimise the risk of this occurring. Children confirm that they do not get bullied in the home.

The home provides a safe environment for children to stay in and play in safely.

Personal evacuation plans are developed for each child. Each child has been involved in evacuating the building. This makes sure, as far as is possible, that in the event of an emergency situation occurring their anxieties are not too raised.

Staff are recruited through a proper process that assesses their suitability. However, the records of the recruitment process are not easily accessible for the manager to audit to ensure that there are no gaps in the process.

Leadership and management

good

The home is well managed by an effective suitably qualified and skilled manager who has a wealth of experience in managing residential care settings. She is a qualified social worker, has a master's degree in social care and a management qualification at level five. A social worker said the manager and her deputy are proactive and work in partnership effectively with the social work team.

There is a proactive and joined up approach taken to monitoring the quality of care and this drives improvements. Overall, the manager has a good understanding of the service's strengths and areas for development and involves interested parties in evaluating the quality of care. A social worker states, 'staff ask what I think about the care and support and how they can improve the service.' However, a recommendation made at the last inspection has not been met. This relates to up to date care plans and minutes of meetings not being provided by some social workers. The manager has tirelessly chased these up with some level of success but information for some children remains outstanding. As the manager and staff know the children so well and work so closely with other professionals and agencies the impact on children is minimal.

There is a clear and informative Statement of Purpose that provides a good view about the aims and objectives of the home for interested parties. The statement requires one minor update regarding the recent appointment of a new responsible individual; this has no impact on children. The guide for children has been updated, this is child-friendly and accessible information so that children know what to expect on their visits to the home. The home is adequately resourced and provides a high quality safe environment for children to have their stays or to live in on a more regular basis.

Staff are experienced in caring for children with special needs and are of a high calibre; they really enjoy their roles. A member of staff commented, 'I feel proud to be part of this team and feel privileged I can use my talents and skills to help care for the children who stay at XX House.' Another said, 'it is a superb place to work.'

Staff know and understand the children well. A parent commented, 'Staff at XX House are gentle and perfect.' And another, 'it's a caring environment, happy devoted staff well cared for children.' Staff receive good quality training. Supervision

is also reported to be of good quality and staff the training and supervision supports them to carry out their roles effectively. However, over the summer period formal supervision has not been in line with the frequency stated within the supervision policy for some staff. However, staff do feel very well supported by the manager and deputy who have been readily available to them over this period so the impact on children has been minimised.

There are very good working relationships with other agencies that ensure that children's packages of care benefit them and are adapted when needs change. Social workers said that staff work in partnership with them.

The home's records are comprehensive and well maintained and provide children and parents with a good view about their time in the home and support staff in understanding each child's needs.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.