

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	25/01/2016
Unique reference number	SC409506
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	Darryl Freeman
Registered manager	Jayne Almond
Inspector	Angie Bishop

Inspection date	25/01/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Improved effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC409506

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Parents and carers are confident that their children are safe; staff meet children's additional needs and enable them to enjoy new experiences.
- Children enjoy stays in this home and view the staff as an extension of their family network.
- A dedicated staff team provide dependable care with consistent boundaries and guidance, in line with children's individual needs.
- Children make exceptional progress in their social and emotional development because of the specifically targeted support and care they receive in this group setting.
- Staff introduce new experiences and activities, which they tailor to children as individuals and a group. This expands the realm of children's capabilities.
- Staff effectively safeguard children, whose safety and wellbeing is central to practice.
- The home presents as warm and welcoming. However, the lack of recent investment in the home's decor does not encourage children to take pride in the home.
- Some risk assessments for specific activities require further development to include clear instruction for the benefit of new staff.
- The majority of staff have the required qualifications for their roles. Some staff, however, are not yet completing a relevant qualification.

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

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 (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
12. In order to meet the protection of children standard the registered provider must ensure that staff: 2(a)(i) assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child.	01/03/2016

Recommendations

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

Ensure that the building is a homely domestic environment. This specifically relates to the impact on young people of the physical presentation in some areas of the home. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 15 paragraph 3.9)

Provide staff with the appropriate resources and facilities to support their training needs, specifically related to the completion of the level three diploma. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 53 paragraph 10.11)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is a short break provision owned and managed by a local authority. It provides care for up to nine children and young people between the ages of eight and seventeen years who are diagnosed as having learning disabilities, including autism and/or challenging behaviour.

The primary aim is to assist young people to develop optimum independence and increased self-esteem in a nurturing environment.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/05/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
30/12/2014	Full	Adequate
09/06/2014	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
10/12/2013	Full	Adequate

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
<p>The manager and staff carefully plan introductions to stays. In the first instance, children and families have the opportunity to visit the home and meet staff and other children. Following this, children's time in the home begins with short tea visits after school. These continue until staff, family and professionals agree that children are ready for overnight stays. A social worker said: 'They took the time to get to know her and understand her. They helped her settle and made her feel comfortable. Her family know she is happy, that is very important.'</p> <p>The enjoyment of new activities contributes to the expansion of children's life experiences. Staff actively encourage children to engage in community activities to develop their social awareness and interaction with peers. Physical activity also forms an important part of daily routines and children learn to play using the outdoor equipment in the garden. For many children, short stays in this home are the only opportunity they have to interact and socialise with their peers outside of school. A parent said: 'They have taught him so much; how to be more sociable. He has learned how to act around his peers, to give and take, sharing. He is beginning to understand himself.'</p> <p>All children are in full time education and travel from school to the home for overnight stays and from the home to school following stays. Strong links exist between the home and school and staff maintain open lines of communication. Staff encourage learning and each child has an in house education target. Staff support children to meet their target and encourage them to research their chosen topics, using multiple learning resources. Because of this, children develop an interest in learning and their engagement in school improves.</p> <p>Staff are creative at introducing life skills appropriate to each child's needs. They use everyday situations to maximise engagement and minimise the distress that new situations can cause the children. Staff monitor, review and reward progress, introducing new skill targets as appropriate. As a result, children experience a sense of achievement, increased self-esteem and new abilities that they can transfer between home, school and this home. A member of staff said: 'One of the best things we do here is promote independence; we give children opportunities they do not have elsewhere. This has all round benefits for the children.'</p> <p>Where children have additional health needs, the staff team receive advice and training from health professionals to support them to meet those needs. Clear medical protocols are in place and all staff understand the importance of adhering</p>	

to guidance, always consulting with parents and professionals as they identify a need to.

Young people regularly meet with staff to share their wishes and feelings. This is often activity based and incorporates learning themes for children. Staff produce a newsletter following planned group meetings; this contains photographic, pictorial and written minutes in a medium that interests the children. The opportunity to chair meetings and prepare the newsletter is open to all children with the support of staff. This process contributes to children's feelings of importance in respect of decision making and develops their sense of identity. A parent said: 'The staff involved the children in a youth parliament and the children had the opportunity to explore politics and their rights. This reaffirmed the importance of their views and integrated them into life in the wider world.'

A new independent advocate visits the home once per month and spends time familiarising herself with the children. Staff support children to ensure they are aware of the role of the advocate and promote their engagement with her. This ensures children can access a person unconnected with their immediate support network if they have any issues or concerns.

The home presents as warm and welcoming for children, their families and professionals. Staff and parents encourage children to personalise their bedroom areas and bring familiar items with them for their stays. Some areas of the home show evidence of extensive use; this includes some flooring and décor, which would benefit from attention. Some areas reflect little recent investment, which does not encourage children to feel valued and to value their surroundings.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
<p>In line with children's additional needs, staff use community activities and situational context to educate and support children to anticipate and comprehend risk. Children and staff plan activities and afterwards staff use photographs, along with written and pictorial narratives, to encourage children to reflect on experiences. A parent said: 'My child got to the point where I could not safely take him out in the community. The staff have done this and they have educated and supported him to keep himself safe. It is fantastic.'</p> <p>During their stays, children do not leave the home without the supervision of staff. Additional security measures are in place within the home, staff use these in accordance with children's care plans and parental consent. These are not restrictive measures. Missing is not a current issue in this home, however, all staff</p>	

are able to recognise the potential for children to absent themselves. Staff know how to implement the home's missing procedures and local protocol if this occurs.

The manager, staff, family members and professionals contribute to the ongoing development and review of children's behaviour management plans. This ensures all care givers deliver consistent responses to children's presenting behaviour. As a result, children feel safe and begin to modify their behaviour within the context of their additional needs. Where staff identify that a child's behaviour places them, their peers or staff at risk they appropriately undertake protective physical interventions. This always follows clear attempts by staff to de-escalate behaviours. A parent said: 'My child is getting on better with the staff, she is listening more and she is getting used to the boundaries and routines. They support me to make sure we all give her the same message.'

The manager engages an independent person to advise and support her in respect of the ongoing review of policies and procedures. This ensures policies within the home are specific to the children who stay here and provides staff with a comprehensive addition to the in house local authority policies.

In collaboration with families and professionals, the manager and staff devise a range of environmental and individual risk assessments. Some of these require a review and further development to ensure clarity.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
<p>The registered manager has been in post for twelve months. She has appropriate qualifications and experience to effectively fulfil her role. Since the last inspection, she has addressed the three requirements and two recommendations raised. The home has two deputy managers, and during the manager's recent period of absence there was continuity of care for the children and support for the staff team. One member of staff said: 'Everything worked like clockwork when the manager was away, everybody knows what they are doing and why they are doing it.'</p> <p>The manager understands the aims of the home and the unique needs of individual children. She actively contributes to care planning and consistently advocates in the best interest of children and families. A social worker said: 'In-house care plans are very detailed. We get a lot of information from their care plans; they provide us with a real insight into how the children function away from their families.'</p>	

The manager's office is now on the ground floor of the building. She situates herself in the area of the home which children occupy during their stays. This means she is accessible to children and staff whilst gaining an invaluable oversight of the provision. This oversight, regular monitoring of the provision and consultation with families and professionals, informs ongoing improvement planning.

Staff receive regular supervision; this is supportive, exploratory and challenging. During annual appraisals line managers review performance and both staff and their managers identify targets and child focused areas of development. Using impromptu opportunities, and, in addition to formal supervision, line managers complete observational supervision at regular intervals. This provides managers with a complete overview of staff practice and ensures staff continue to develop and remain able to deliver the quality of care children require. Staff are unanimously positive about the support management offer and the impact this has on them. One member of staff said: 'Twelve months ago I was considering my position as I felt the home had lost direction. Now we have an experienced, approachable manager it has made a massive difference.'

Children enjoy positive relationships with all staff. There is a consistent and cohesive approach to care delivery. Relationships are characterised by trust and staff understand each child's unique needs. Staff combine this understanding with the theoretical base their ongoing training provides. Some staff are not yet undertaking the level three qualification. Completion of this will enable them to develop their practice further for the benefit of the children who stay in this home.

New staff complete a six month probationary period during which time their manager reviews their practice at one, three and six months. The expectation is they will complete a comprehensive training program during their first six months. The manager closes the home for one day a month for external and internal training. Where there is no training scheduled, the manager and staff make constructive use of the time to review their practice and explore any issues they may be affecting the care they deliver.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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 who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This 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 Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted*, which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, workbased learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It inspects services for looked after children and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2016