

## Children's homes inspection – Full

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| <b>Inspection date</b>           | <b>21/09/2016</b>  |
| <b>Unique reference number</b>   | <b>SC409502</b>  |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>        | <b>Full</b>  |
| <b>Provision subtype</b>         | <b>Children's home</b>   |
| <b>Registered person</b>         | <b>Bedford Borough Council</b>   |
| <b>Registered person address</b> | <b>Bedford Borough Council,<br/>Borough Hall, Cauldwell Street,<br/>Bedford MK42 9AP</b> |
| <b>Registered manager</b>        | <b>Sally Summers</b>   |
| <b>Inspector</b>                 | <b>Sonia Hay</b>   |

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| <b>Inspection date</b>  | <b>21/09/2016</b>             |
| <b>Previous inspection judgement</b>  | <b>Improved effectiveness</b> |
| <b>Enforcement action since last inspection</b>   | <b>None</b>                   |
| <b>This inspection</b>  |                               |
| <b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</b> | <b>Good</b>                   |
| The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.            |                               |
| <b>How well children and young people are helped and protected</b>                              | <b>Good</b>                   |
| <b>The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>                                     | <b>Good</b>                   |

## SC409502

### Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- The children benefit from an experienced team of staff who have worked together for a number of years. They are very familiar with each of the individual children's needs.
- The children continually make good progress in incremental stages, in line with their differing abilities.
- The staff have developed very good relationships with the range of schools attended by the children who have respite stays. They develop targets for children that complement those set by school.
- Children enjoy their stays. Where possible, these occur at the same time as those of their friends or children with similar interests to allow the children to expand their friendship groups.
- Parents say that they know that their children are safe and well cared for, and are at ease when leaving their children in the care of the staff.
- Staff recognise the smallest of changes in the children's health and seek medical attention, as required. This shows that staff are focused on the children's health and physical well-being.
- Staff ensure that the children benefit from smooth transitions when they commence and cease using the service.
- There are some staff who require updated refresher training. This has resulted in a recommendation being set.

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

### **Recommendations**

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

- Ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs.

In particular, ensure that all staff undertake the required refresher courses as identified on the home's training matrix. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)

## Full report

### Information about this children's home

The home is owned by a local authority. It provides care and accommodation for up to five children with physical disabilities, learning disabilities and sensory impairments. Children can be accommodated under short-break arrangements. Additionally, one child can be accommodated as a permanent placement and one child can be accommodated under a shared-care arrangement.

### Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement      |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| 06/01/2016      | Interim         | Improved effectiveness    |
| 29/07/2015      | Full            | Good                      |
| 13/03/2015      | Interim         | Declined in effectiveness |
| 19/09/2014      | Full            | Good                      |

## Inspection judgements

|  | Judgement grade |
|--|-----------------|
| <b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are</b>  | <b>Good</b>     |
| <p>The home currently has both long-term placements and a shared-care placement. There were also two children having respite stays.</p> <p>The children have a range of complex health needs. Staff have received specific training in certain medical feeding methods and the use of specialised equipment. The staff ensure that the children's medical needs are met and appointments attended. Any changes in the children's health are noted. Staff recently alerted a child's parents to their concern about his complaints of headaches. The staff immediately sought medical attention and the child received the required treatment. The parents were complimentary about the staff and the rapid action that they took. This results in parents feeling that their children are well looked after by staff whom they trust.</p> <p>The house is well maintained and homely. Staff ensure that each child's stay is special, and spend time preparing and personalising the room before their arrival. Where possible, the children stay in the same room at each visit. This, along with the personalisation of the room, helps the children to feel at home immediately.</p> <p>The interactions between the children and staff are warm and caring. Staff use varied communication methods to seek the children's views. This demonstrates the staff team's understanding and knowledge of each child, and ensures that all children are able to have their voices heard.</p> <p>The children are encouraged to participate in a number of activities within the community. A staff member described how the children socialise and are able to 'build on their independence skills by engaging in activities and tasks that they can't do at home'. This broadens the children's exposure to new experiences and assists with their emotional and social well-being.</p> <p>Children's achievements are noted and celebrated using an achievement wall. This consists of pictures of the children, and flower petals and leaves are added when children have a positive experience or meet their goals and targets.</p> <p>The children's care plans detail essential information, including how each child communicates, including verbal and non-verbal cues, and their likes and dislikes. These provide staff and visitors with a quick overview of each child and ensure that the children know that staff are consistent in their approaches.</p> |                 |

Staff have a good rapport with the schools and, in addition to transporting the children, they visit to meet teachers to ensure that they are working on the children's targets in conjunction with school. This is aided by the use of the children's communication books that detail current goals and targets, which allows the home or school to highlight anything that may be impacting on these being achieved. A headteacher detailed one child's complex learning needs, and the focus on building his gross motor skills and ability to complete practical tasks, such as cookery, to assist his transition to adulthood. He summarised by saying, 'He is doing well; progress is slow and limited.' This recognition of the children's complex needs and how to recognise and celebrate slow incremental progress is incorporated into care plans, placement and education plans.

Staff facilitate contact visits with the families of the children who are living at the home on a full-time or shared-care basis. This ensures that the children maintain strong family links, and forges a positive co-parenting relationship.

Children benefit from having a structured daily routine. There are picture boards of the staff on shift. These allow the children to know who will be looking after them. One child keeps a daily plan with him to minimise his levels of anxiety about unplanned events. His plan contains pictures of staff and pictorial representations of the planned activities and routine events for the day, which he removes as each is completed. The importance of this was evident when a different worker to the one whom he had expected arrived to conduct a wheelchair assessment. Staff successfully supported him through his initial upset and the worker was able to complete the assessment. The structured daily routine allows children to be cared for in a nurturing and individualised way by staff who are attuned to the children's moods and feelings.

One child, who has been having respite at the home for ten years, is due to cease using the service in the coming months. This is causing some anxiety for the child's parent. There are transitional arrangements to ensure that children transition to adult placements smoothly, which include staff from the new placement visiting the child during a respite stay and staff from the home visiting the new placement to share their knowledge of the child. The team is consolidating this process with increased liaison with the authority's adult social work team.

A social worker described the vast improvement in his child's presentation since being at the home, and said the home is 'brilliant' and 'we fell on our feet, placing here'. Other professionals and family members echoed this positive feedback.

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|---|-----------------|
|   | Judgement grade |
| <b>How well children and young people are helped and protected</b>  | <b>Good</b>     |
| <p>The children's complex medical and physical needs require staff to supervise them at all times. This means that there are no episodes of being missing from home. Staff ensure that they use key-work sessions and house meetings to discuss a range of topics, including any safeguarding issues.</p> <p>Staff undertake specific medical training courses that enable them to meet the complex medical needs of the children. One child has a specific feeding system that is less used in a community setting. This demonstrates the level of competence in the team, and the confidence that the medical professionals involved have in both the staff and the child's family.</p> <p>Comprehensive risk assessments are in place for each child for both their medical care, feeding regimes and routine activities. These cover events in the home and out in the community. Staff update them regularly and build them into the placement plans to allow the children to take appropriate risks. This allows children to achieve an increased level of independence, developed at their own pace.</p> <p>Children have 'all about me' plans that detail all aspects of their care. These are child friendly and written from the individual's perspective. They include how to safely transfer children who are wheelchair users in and out of their chairs, beds and baths. This ensures the children's safety in the event that a staff member is unfamiliar with their routine.</p> <p>The children are encouraged to develop friendships. The coordination of their stays allows them to have respite at the same time as their friends and classmates. This allows the children to develop existing friendships further and build new ones. When out on activities, staff ensure that they keep contact numbers in the children's bags to ensure that they can contact parents/carers immediately, in the event of an emergency.</p> <p>Many of the children have been attending respite stays at the home for several years. In that period, the team has remained largely unchanged. There has been one leaver since the last inspection. This level of stability within the team allows the children and their families to benefit from clear and consistent boundaries from a staff team that is very knowledgeable about them, their emotions, and their likes and dislikes. This is essential when the children are often unable to verbalise these feelings.</p> <p>There is no use of physical interventions or sanctions. Some children have behavioural support plans to assist them in addressing any negative or challenging behaviour. Staff have worked positively with one child to reduce his self-injurious</p> |                 |

behaviour, and he has ceased needing to wear his karate helmet and a mitten for protection. It is evident that the families feel that their children are safe. A parent described feeling relaxed when their child is having a stay, as the staff 'know her as well as I do. I trust them.'

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|---|-----------------|
|   | Judgement grade |
| <b>The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers</b>   | <b>Good</b>     |
| <p>The manager has many years' experience of residential care and has worked in the home for 18 years. She has a level 5 qualification in management and a foundation degree in care management.</p> <p>The manager enthusiastically ensures that children have a positive stay and that their individual needs are at the core of all planning. The documentation viewed demonstrates that she advocates for the children. A current example is her liaison with a local adult provision in a bid to ensure that a child experiences a positive transition to an adult placement. This ensures that children benefit from plans that are focused on their varying stages of development and ability, and recognises their need for continuity of care.</p> <p>Staff say that they find both the manager and deputy manager supportive. The manager is open to ideas, and seeks feedback from staff about suggestions on how to improve processes, activities and recording. An example of this is the books that a staff member has created for a child to explain his routine and his care plan. The manager is now considering introducing these for each of the children. Another example is the extension of the achievement wall, which was a staff member's suggestion, and is to be a feature for the children.</p> <p>Staff receive regular structured supervision. This allows staff time to reflect on their practice and, in turn, ensures that the children benefit from a team of staff who are reflective and motivated.</p> <p>The training matrix details both mandatory and developmental training. The staff all possess the level 3 qualification. The training matrix includes courses specific to the needs of the children placed. An example is gastro feeding. Some of the refresher training for these medical courses is overdue. The staff team is very competent and has undertaken the medical training courses on numerous occasions. However, to comply with the local authority's own policies, these courses should be attended at the required intervals.</p> <p>The manager is clear that, although the team has worked together for a number of years, management and staff are still striving to set aspirational goals for the</p> |                 |

children and themselves as a team. The children's progress is at the centre of all planning, and staff are required to demonstrate how they are working with the children to reach the goals that have been set in conjunction with the children's families, schools, social workers and other professionals.

The recommendation made at the last inspection has been met. The regular file audits conducted by the managers ensure that the children's files contain relevant information, and managers indicate on the files where updated information is required. This ensures that staff have access to information about children that is current and up to date.

The team has a good relationship with the families and the professionals involved in the children's lives. Those spoken with were all positive about the staff and, in particular, the manager. One professional described the manager as 'amazing' and her staff as 'thoughtful and caring'.

## 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 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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