

SC409502

Registered provider: Bedford Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority home provides care and accommodation under short-break arrangements for up to five children who have physical disabilities and/or learning disabilities and/or sensory impairments. Additionally, one child can be accommodated as a permanent placement and one child can be accommodated under a shared care arrangement.

Inspection dates: 15 to 16 August 2017

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 **outstanding**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 16 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- The children are encouraged to voice their opinions and make suggestions

about their care, the home and the activities that they participate in.

- A consistent staff team cares for the children. The staff know the children well and they set aspirational targets for each child.
- The children's progress and achievements are rewarded and celebrated by the staff. The details of these are displayed on the home's 'WOW' achievement wall.
- The children participate in the running of the home.
- The home has good working relationships with the children, their families and the professionals involved in the children's lives.
- The children are encouraged to discuss matters concerning their safety, providing them with information that supports them in keeping themselves safe.
- The manager is ambitious for the children and ensures that service is child-focused.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
21/09/2016	Full	Good
06/01/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
29/07/2015	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The house has a homely feel. The children's bedrooms have individualised themes and the staff personalise them with items that match the children's likes and preferences, such as superhero or film character bedding. The children bring items from home to enable them to have familiar items with them during their stays. A staff member is leading on the garden project initiative, which includes a mud kitchen that the children can use for pouring, measuring and messy activities. Although still in the early stages, this is creating a better outdoor environment for the children to explore and play in.

There are currently 23 children accessing the service. This includes one child who lives at the home and another who stays as part of a shared care arrangement. The children have a wide range of physical and learning needs. Some of the children have life-limiting illnesses.

At the time of the last inspection, one child was having an extended period of stays to assist her in the transition to an adult service. Her transition went smoothly and she is successfully accessing an adult provision and has ceased having stays at the home.

Parents speak very positively about the care that their children receive and how they, as families, also benefit from the children's respite stays. Many describe the stays as 'sleepovers' and say that knowing their child is safely cared for enables them to spend time with their other children, including taking day trips or completing household chores.

A staff team that understands the children's differing communication styles cares for the children. The staff work in a consistent manner to ensure that the children do not experience any unexpected changes to their routine. The use of the whiteboard and notice boards helps the children to know who will be looking after them. Systems such as a pictorial 'now and next' board enable the children to have some element of choice in their days/activities. In understanding that many of the children struggle with change, the staff use tools such as social stories to communicate any variation in the child's routine. These enable the children to have a better understanding of what they will be doing, what they may experience and what will follow. Having used a social story to inform and prepare a child for his wheelchair assessment, staff had to use another social story to explain to him that this appointment had been rescheduled. This forward-thinking demonstrates how the staff team kept the child involved and informed to avoid him becoming agitated because his schedule had altered.

Each child has agreed goals and targets that they work on during their stays. These can include feeding themselves, getting dressed or socialising with the other children. Children have regular key-work sessions that cover topics linked to their aims and goals. As the children achieve the steps towards these targets, they receive rewards and positive praise. Records of these rewards are on display on the 'WOW' wall of achievements.

The manager conducts a monthly key-work session audit. This lists each child's session for the month, and details the child's rewards and the steps they have made towards achieving their goals. The audits highlight any action that the staff may need to take to

assist the child, such as liaising with their school about communication methods. This process provides the manager with a clear overview of the progress that the children are making because of their stays.

The children's meetings, known as 'Voice Groups', offer the children the opportunity to share their views on the home, their care, any items that they would like and activities that they would like to participate in. The introduction of a mobile app that the children can use to express their views and feelings helps the staff to gain feedback from a wider range of children.

The staff spoke proudly about one of the older children's recent attendance at his school prom. The child was able to say that he had been to his school's superhero-themed prom night when looking at pictures of him taken that night. The staff had helped him to dress smartly as Clark Kent, press pass included, with his superman T-shirt underneath. This attention to detail enabled him to fully participate in this teenage milestone.

The staff arrange visits to the children's schools to observe the children in a different setting. This joint approach enables the staff to adopt strategies that the schools use and to share those that they are aware work well with the children in the home. A similar approach is used when the staff are supporting the children and their families to prepare for transitions. The staff from the new provision visit while the child is having a stay and the home's staff share their knowledge with them. The team is currently advocating for additional support for one child to address his heightened level of anxiety about moving on. The request has been made at a very early stage to ensure that the additional support is in place by the time he is due to move next year.

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

The review of the premises is comprehensive and details the risks, severity and likelihood of each of the specific aspects that the manager has assessed. The compatibility of the children with each other is considered at the time of allocating stays and is based on the manager's knowledge of the children and any feedback from parents and social workers about friendship groups. A formal compatibility assessment was completed when the child who is currently residing permanently at the home was moving in. This assessment process was to ensure that neither he nor the other children would suffer any negative effects from him living at the home on a full-time basis. The children's individual risk assessments are updated regularly. They are updated sooner should any new behaviours/needs arise.

Due to the nature of the children's disabilities and their level of need, the home does not use physical interventions or sanctions. The staff promote positive behaviours effectively, and reinforce these through rewards and praise. Children do not go missing from home. The staff are aware of the processes to follow should this occur.

The staff use the children's 'Voice Group' for discussing safeguarding matters. At a recent meeting there was a card game about safe and unsafe secrets, in which the children were able to understand the example of unsafe secrets. The children were able to say that they would tell someone if they were asked to be quiet about an unsafe secret. The staff were clear that they had no concerns about anyone working at the home. They confidently described how they would address any safeguarding concerns

should they arise.

The home has not received any complaints since the last inspection. The home logs any 'grumbles'. These are issues raised informally and the manager responds to these in the same way as a formal complaint. As a result, the children know that any concerns will be resolved.

The staff conduct weekly electrical, fire and buildings checks in the house and highlight any faults that they detect. They record who these have been reported to and when they have been addressed. This auditing process ensures that the children are staying in a hazard-free environment.

It is extremely rare that a child has an accident/injury dissimilar to the bumps and scrapes that they could get playing at home. The accidents and incidents records demonstrate that the children can cause accidental injuries to other children or the staff by suddenly kicking and hitting out at them. These incidents are incorporated into the children's support plans to minimise the likelihood of repeat occurrences.

The rota shows that the home has the staffing complement on shift to meet the children's needs. However, due to staff vacancies and long-term sickness the staff are accruing additional hours through covering shifts. The manager has praised the staff for their commitment to the children as this has meant that the children do not experience any disruption to their care.

Children are cared for and safeguarded. Their families say that they feel their children are safe in the care of the staff. A parent said, '[Name of child] is totally safe here. She used to just sit in one place but she will now wander around and I know she is happy. Another said that they were so at ease that, 'I don't call in anymore as I know he's ok.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home's statement of purpose clearly details the services that are offered to the children and their families, and mirrors the 'user-led service' that the staff and professionals describe. The manager has worked at the home for 28 years and has held the role of manager since August 2015. She possesses the level 4 registered manager's award, a foundation degree in care and management, and a level 5 award in leadership and management. The manager leads by example. She is ambitious for each of the children. The staff describe the manager as approachable, fun and child-focused. A staff member said, 'She will muck in if we need another pair of hands.'

The team consists of a number of staff who have worked at the home for at least a decade. One staff member described working at the home for 24 years in positive terms. This consistency provides the children with care from adults who know them very well. The recruitment process is robust and the staff have to complete a fresh police check every three years. The manager ensures that the home's staff identification records are updated when an identity document, such as a passport, has been renewed. When an existing employee has transferred to the home, the manager has undertaken additional verification of the references supplied to the local authority to be able to confidently state that she has verified the references for all the staff she has employed. This robust process ensures that children are safeguarded.

The staff describe their supervision sessions as a positive experience which they use to

discuss the children and their own development, and to reflect on their practice. The manager oversees the staff training schedule to ensure that the staff are working with current knowledge and practice. With the exception of newer staff members, all staff possess a level 3 or equivalent qualification.

The staff access a wide range of training courses, such as fire safety, safe handling of medication and safeguarding, which incorporates topics such as child sexual exploitation and radicalisation. The staff also receive specific medical needs training, such as epilepsy awareness and gastrostomy feeding. This training enables the staff to competently and confidently complete tasks in these areas.

The manager has undertaken the six-monthly review of the quality of care. The report evaluates the home's development and progress in the six-month period. It gives good examples of how the home is improving areas such as liaison with the children's schools and seeking feedback from families.

The home has had a change of independent visitor. Their reports detail areas of good practice. The reports address the only shortfall highlighted at the last inspection. The visitor writes a summary to the children. This is positive as it involves the children in the monthly reporting.

The manager has an excellent understanding of the progress that the children make and works with the key workers to review targets and goals set for the children. She is attuned to the strengths and weaknesses of the home. The team plan for 2017 to 2018 details the way that the manager is seeking to improve the service, and lists the indicators that will demonstrate that the targets have been achieved. The manager uses the independent visitor reports and her own six-monthly quality of care reports to drive improvement.

A recent example of a positive change is the children's files transferring to a new streamlined format which compiles into a chronological monthly log book. The new system allows easy access to the children's current information.

The manager actively promotes the use of the independent advocate to provide an additional source of support to the children. The manager has used the advocate to assist children in completing their feedback surveys as this provides a higher level of impartiality in their responses. The manager conducts an audit to track any actions that arise from the children's 'Voice Group' to ensure that the matters the children raise are responded to and addressed. This oversight of the process ensures that the manager gains the views of the children on the running of the home and activities.

Professionals speak very positively about the home and describe the team as professional and reliable. One social worker described how the manager and her team excellently advocate on behalf of the children. They chase the social workers and placing authorities for updated paperwork and any additional support, such as psychological support, that they believe the children need. Social workers and parents describe the positive changes that they have seen in the children, such as improved speech, socialisation and self-help skills.

The manager skilfully ensures that equality and diversity are built into the home by being child-focused and needs-led to ensure that each child is cared for in an

individualised way.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC409502

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Bedford Borough Council, Borough Hall, Cauldwell Street, Bedford MK42 9AP

Responsible individual: Martin Purbrick

Registered manager: Sally Summers

Inspector

Sonia Hay, social care inspector

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, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding 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 1231, 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 <http://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 <http://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: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2017