

# SC030713

Registered provider: Wokingham Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

The children's home is a resource centre for disabled children and their families and is owned and managed by the local council. One of the services offered at the centre is residential short-break care for disabled children. The centre is registered to accommodate at any one time up to five children who have a learning and/or physical disability.

**Inspection dates:** 15 to 16 February 2018

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account** **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

**Date of last inspection:** 22 March 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** sustained effectiveness

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- Strong leaders and managers strive for excellence and continually look for ways to develop the service.
- Children really look forward to their stay and enjoy experiencing things that they would not ordinarily get the chance to do.
- Effective monitoring systems ensure that the quality of care remains high.
- Children are actively encouraged to learn new skills and supported to be as independent as possible.
- Leaders and managers go to great lengths to ensure that the staff have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience required to look after the children.
- Safeguarding is embedded into all areas of practice. Children know how to complain and know that what they say will be taken seriously by managers who will follow up their concerns.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Independent visits to the home have not always provided the level of scrutiny expected by leaders and managers.
- Supervision records do not evidence the quality of the discussions taking place between the staff and the managers.

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
15/12/2016	Full	Outstanding
18/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
19/11/2015	Full	Outstanding

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

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet 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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children’s home at least once each month. (Regulation 44 (1))	31/05/2018

### Recommendations

- The registered person must have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- Any individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person must make a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home’s arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the home’s care. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 65, paragraph 15.5)

### Inspection judgements

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

Children benefit enormously from their short breaks and look forward to them. On arrival, they are met with a warm welcome from friendly staff who know them well. The well-established staff team works hard to ensure that the children receive consistent care during their stay. This includes working closely with parents, actively seeking their views and sharing strategies. A parent spoken with at the time of the inspection said that ‘patient and caring staff do an excellent job’ supporting their child and meet their high standards of care. Because of this approach, one child remained living at home during a difficult period.

Comprehensive and detailed plans identify and address the children’s very individual and complex needs. The staff know and understand the children extremely well and diligently

follow written guidance. Focusing on independence, children are encouraged to learn and develop new skills according to their ability. The staff use individual 'scrapbooks' to record evidence of the children working towards, or achieving, their targets, to show parents their achievements. Parents have welcomed this approach as it enables them to keep up to date when their child is away from home.

Parents have also welcomed the new style of monthly reports, which provide very detailed information about the progress their children are making. Easy to read, they evaluate and report on care plan targets. They also include children's views obtained during their visits. Parents' comments on the reports evidence the impact that the work undertaken by the staff has at home. For example, one parent had written that their child had 'become good at making his own breakfast', something they may not have even tried if the staff had not led the way.

The centre is very well equipped with age-appropriate toys and games to keep the children occupied. Whether choosing to play alone, with friends or the staff, wall displays and photographs show the children enjoying themselves. During the inspection, one child thoroughly enjoyed looking back at old photo albums and naming current and former staff and children. Staff said that both children staying at the time of the inspection had been friends for a long time, both in the setting and at school.

Enthusiastic staff create an environment where the children have great fun and have the opportunity to enjoy things that they would not ordinarily get the chance to do. Well-thought-out activities are planned a month in advance by a senior member of staff and are offered to the children alongside free play.

Using cultural themes, activities are integrated into all aspects of the day and incorporate the children's individual goals, for example working on cause and effect while playing puzzles. Recently, the children celebrated Chinese New Year by playing a traditional game of 'tug of war', eating Chinese food using chopsticks, and listening to Chinese music. All children, regardless of their ability, are able to participate and enjoy the range of experiences available.

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

Knowledgeable staff know how to keep the children safe while they are away from home. This includes reporting and recording their concerns appropriately. Parents spoken with during the inspection confirmed this and gave examples of the staff following up unexplained marks and bruising, in accordance with the safeguarding policy. Recognising the children's vulnerability generally, managers are keen to ensure that the staff remain alert to the possibility of abuse and do not become complacent. Therefore, recent training in managing allegations took place to address this, despite there being no concerns in this area.

Excellent practice in behaviour management has helped some children to reduce their more negative behaviours and anxieties. Detailed plans describe what types of behaviour

the child might display, along with strategies on how to manage these if they occur. This includes de-escalation techniques and the use of social stories to help manage their behaviour and feelings. Physical interventions and sanctions are very rarely used, but when they are, reviews of incidents evidence that staff have used these appropriately and as a last resort.

The policy and procedure for the safe handling and administration of children's medicines exceed standards. A qualified nurse oversees these arrangements, training new staff, ensuring they are competent and keeping the whole process under constant review. This includes managing medication errors and discrepancies, and, while the number of incidents is low, her focus is on ensuring that lessons are learned and action is taken to prevent a reoccurrence. Children's safety is the main priority and practice is very open and transparent.

Leaders and managers actively consult with children, parents and professionals about the service they receive. Questionnaires are used as a formal way to seek their views, and, while the majority of people consulted were very complimentary, there were a few areas where they felt the service could improve. Taking these comments on board, the managers responded to the points by letter, explaining the context behind the questions and the action taken as a result of the responses. This practice creates transparency and helps build trust and confidence in the service.

Formal complaints about the service are minimal. Records viewed during the inspection show that managers take all complaints seriously and investigate them thoroughly. This includes complaints from the children. One example resulted in a child not wanting a member of staff to work when she was staying. The managers' response clearly showed that, although there had been a misunderstanding, the child was listened to and protocols were put in place to prevent a similar situation occurring again.

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

The leadership and management arrangements in the home are outstanding. The registered manager, together with the deputy, continually strive for excellence. Effective monitoring systems help to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the service. For example, visits carried out by the independent person over the past year did not provide the level of quality, frequency, challenge and scrutiny expected. Emails seen during the inspection evidence managers addressing these shortfalls and challenging the issues. As a result, senior managers have agreed to fund alternative arrangements in future.

Fortunately, due to the level of internal scrutiny carried out by leaders and managers, the impact of this has been minimal and the home has continued to flourish. Using a 'live tool' to record information from regular audits, progress is monitored and evaluated against the quality standards and underpinning legislation. Findings from this process contribute to improving the overall service delivery and experiences and outcomes for the children.

The monitoring and analysis of behaviours that have required physical interventions or sanctions is comprehensive. Recognising a rise in incidents from the previous year, the registered manager carried out a review to look at the reasons for this. Keen to spot any patterns or trends, consideration was given to both internal and external factors that may have contributed to the increase in individual children's challenging behaviour. As a result of this, individual plans have been reviewed and actions taken to address behaviours within the home's control.

Leaders and managers go to great lengths to ensure that the staff have the necessary skills, knowledge, experience and qualifications to look after the children in their care. For example, only staff with the relevant background are employed to work in the setting. However, on some occasions the staff member's previous qualifications, such as paediatric nursing, may not have covered all of the relevant topics. In these instances, managers facilitate access to a local college and support staff to address their gaps in learning. This includes studying topics such as working with children in a residential setting.

The overall practice in relation to staff supervision is good; however, the frequency and quality of the meetings is not consistent with the managers' high standards. Because of this, a monitoring tool has been put in place to address this shortfall. Therefore, leaders and managers are optimistic that practice will improve in this area, particularly with support from the new independent visitor. The aim is to ensure that staff will benefit from regular reflective supervision in the near future. This will ultimately have a positive impact on the children using the service.

## **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:** SC030713

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Wokingham District Council

**Registered provider address:** PO Box 154, Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 1WN

**Responsible individual:** Lisa Humphreys

**Registered manager:** David Green

## Inspector

Amanda Harvey, social care inspector

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