

SC409506

Registered provider: Bedford Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This short-break service is owned and managed by a local authority. It provides care for up to six children aged eight to 17 who are diagnosed with learning disabilities, including autism spectrum disorders and/or challenging behaviour. The primary aim is to help children to develop optimum independence and increased self-esteem in a nurturing environment. The manager of the home was registered with Ofsted in August 2017.

Inspection dates: 7 to 8 March 2019

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 **good**

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

Date of last inspection: 26 September 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/09/2017	Full	Good
15/12/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
09/08/2016	Full	Good
25/01/2016	Full	Good

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
<p>The registered person must—</p> <p>keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and</p> <p>notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (3)(a)(b))</p>	12/04/2019
<p>The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month.</p> <p>The independent person must produce a report about a visit which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether—</p> <p>children are effectively safeguarded; and</p> <p>the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being.</p> <p>The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person's report to—</p> <p>HMCI. (Regulation 44 (1)(4)(a)(b)(7)(a))</p>	12/04/2019

Recommendations

- Ensure that placements for children are only accepted when managers are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs as recorded in the child's relevant plan and when they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children benefit from a variety of experiences and make good progress from their starting points. The priority of this short-break service is to enable children to socialise safely and have fun. Children experience opportunities that families may struggle to provide. A parent said, 'I would never have dreamt of taking [child's name] to the theatre as I didn't think he would be able to cope. He loved it and has gone twice now. They give him opportunities that I cannot give him in the community.' Another parent said, 'They arrange for him to stay with children his own age and he calls them his friends, which is really nice to see.'

The good quality of care ensures that children have a positive experience during their stays. Many of the children have difficulties communicating verbally. The children are enabled to make their opinions known through good-quality key-work sessions. Staff do this by using words, scripts and symbols. During these sessions, children can choose activities, plan the menu for the week and join in with the home's monthly theme. Recently, the children experienced a Chinese New Year themed month, which included enjoying a Chinese meal.

All the children attend education regularly. The home and schools work in a collaborative way to provide the best outcomes for the children. An education professional said, 'It is a really good home. The staff visit the school and observe the children. The staff are supportive of the school's targets. They support parents very well by enabling them to access provisions and attend meetings. The staff go above and beyond.'

Children's achievements are recognised and celebrated. Staff openly praise them for being kind, helpful and happy. Each child receives a point for every achievement. When children have 10 points, they receive a personalised certificate and a small prize of their choice. This approach promotes positive behaviour, raises children's self-esteem and helps them to further develop their social skills.

Staff encourage children to learn new skills. Staff set work tasks such as making the bed and learning to brush their teeth independently. A child's social worker described the progress that the child has made in her independence skills as 'amazing'. The social worker said, '[The child] would not go to bed without her mother lying next to her. After having a few overnight stays, she now takes herself to bed and allows her mother to tuck her in and leave the room.'

Transitions in and out of the home are very well planned by the thoughtful and dedicated staff team. The children are given time to familiarise themselves with the staff and other children before commencing overnight stays. Staff prepare the children for the move to adult provisions by using visual scripts detailing the planned visits. Placement endings are celebrated with a meal, and the children leave with a photo booklet detailing their time spent at the home. A social worker said, 'The quality work that they have completed with him has been integral to his transition.' A parent said, 'Love it. Absolutely

love it. They have been amazing, helping his transition with social stories. It's a shame that they can't provide breaks until he is 30 years old.'

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

Managers and staff understand the additional vulnerabilities of the children who stay at the home. Each child has detailed risk assessments and a personal emergency evacuation plan. Prior to each child's stay, these documents are read out at the staff handover. This means that the staff caring for the children have the necessary information to ensure that children are protected.

Risk assessments are updated promptly following changes in presenting behaviour. They include measures needed to manage risks effectively. However, there are no individual children's impact risk assessments. The lack of impact risk assessments means that staff are not helped to understand the risk that children may pose to each other or the opportunities created by placing certain children together. This shortfall is minimised by the well-planned staff handovers and the positive working knowledge of the staff.

There have been no incidents of children going missing from this home. Staff are alert to the possible risks while out in the community and the staffing levels are planned to ensure that the necessary level of supervision is provided. The home has effective procedures for staff to follow if an incident occurs.

The use of physical intervention is infrequent. It is only undertaken to prevent children from hurting themselves and others. Staff monitor children closely and are skilled at de-escalating unsafe behaviours. The staff respond in a consistent manner and patiently reinforce boundaries. The children are consistently rewarded for positive behaviour and respond well to this. Positive short-term rewards and a calm, consistent approach have led to children's behaviour stabilising.

All staff have received safeguarding training. They have a clear understanding of the procedures to follow and recognise that they have a duty to safeguard children. The home has good links with the designated officer, who said, 'I don't have any concerns about this home. The manager has asked me to attend the home to speak with staff to enable them to gain a greater understanding of our role. I feel that this is good practice, being invited into the home.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The experienced and knowledgeable manager holds a level 4 diploma in leadership and management and has just started a level 5 diploma course. He is well supported by two deputy managers. The manager and one of the deputies have worked at the home for a number of years. They lead by example and are passionate about providing a quality service. A member of staff said, 'The managers know the children very well. They are approachable and supportive.' Another staff member said, 'I feel valued. You get praised here when you do something well. The manager runs a good home.'

The manager and staff communicate well with families and professionals. Staff record in the communication book, which is used by parents and school staff. Any new information is shared promptly. The manager and staff are strong advocates for the children, ensuring that the children's individual needs are recognised. A social worker said, 'The staff complete quality work and are proactive on [the child's] behalf. Communication is very good, and they work in partnership with all agencies and parents.'

Staff supervision is of a good quality, with discussions in relation to the children, key-working duties, reflective practice and training needs. New staff receive a structured induction and all staff have undertaken the organisation's mandatory training. Most of the staff hold a relevant level 3 qualification and eligible staff are in the process of completing this qualification. This means that staff are well equipped to care for the children safely.

The manager has a clear development plan. He is ambitious for the home to continuously improve. His plans include updating the home's environment. Three of the bedrooms have already been refurbished to a very high standard. The soft play area has been updated and the sensory room has an array of new equipment. This has been achieved through careful planning and receipt of charity donations.

Internal monitoring systems review and evaluate the quality of care provided. The independent visitor's monthly report is detailed and provides feedback. However, several of these reports have not been submitted to Ofsted and the reports do not state whether the children are safeguarded effectively and whether their well-being is promoted.

The statement of purpose has been updated to reflect changes in practice. Recent amendments have resulted in updates to the staffing arrangements. These updated versions of the document were not submitted to Ofsted. This does not enable Ofsted to have a current view of the home.

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: SC409506

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: Alexander Milligan

Inspector

Lynne Drage: social care inspector

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