

SC030713

Registered provider: Wokingham Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is a resource centre for children with disabilities and their families and is owned and managed by the local district council. One of the services offered at the centre is residential short-break care for children with a disability. The centre is registered for five young people aged between eight and 17 who have a learning and/or physical disability, and many of the children also present challenging behaviour.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since 8 November 2018.

Inspection dates: 10 to 11 December 2019

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: 18 March 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/03/2019	Full	Outstanding
13/02/2018	Full	Outstanding
22/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
15/12/2016	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children are cared for by energetic, enthusiastic and highly motivated staff. Staff engage the children in meaningful activities that are led by their wishes. For example, one child thoroughly enjoyed their first ride on a train, promoting their independence and developing a new interest.

Children learn skills to become independent, for example how to peel vegetables for dinner or how to make themselves breakfast. Children work towards achieving three goals. However, this is not reflective of the considerable progress children make. For example, a child's report captured 33 areas of progress, which included dressing themselves, decorating a cake, learning to use a fork and spoon and visiting a restaurant where they managed to eat their dinner without the use of a plate guard. This level of progress is excellent.

Staff photograph the children's special moments, such as their first visit and experiences over the years. Families and professionals receive illustrated monthly newsletters, which highlight the children's progress and experiences. Staff collate these into a 'My journey' book for each child, to create a beautiful reflection of treasured memories for the child and their family to look back on and enjoy.

The home has recently been re-decorated, and there are new soft furnishings and pictures throughout. This gives a warm and homely feel to the environment. Key information is displayed, for example, on the colourful Christmas- and birthday-themed notice boards, which stand out, making them visible and appealing to the children. Bedrooms have been renamed and take on their own personality, feeling cosy and inviting for the children.

Children benefit enormously from a range of stimulating activities. The well-equipped environment includes a sensory and art room. Children enjoy being the disc jockey and singing and dancing at the weekly disco. They grow organic vegetables and enjoy the garden in the summer months. Outings in which the children explore the Gruffalo Trail and enjoy a relaxing boating trip are well received. Such activities truly enrich the children's lives.

Children's moves into and on from this service are thoughtfully and well managed. There is clear understanding of how hard this process can be for the families and the children. Careful matching ensures that children are placed in groups to give them a positive and happy experience each time they visit. When it is time for a child to move on, staff prepare the child and are extremely supportive in helping families to identify follow-on support services.

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

The children feel safe and happy when they visit this home. They show this through their huge smiles, relaxed manner and constant interaction with staff. One child displays their affection towards staff by giving them nick-names such as 'frog' and 'toad'. Parents all said that their children look forward to and enjoy their visits, and one parent said that her child 'absolutely loves going to [name of home]. He runs to the door without even saying goodbye.'

Children's behaviour is clearly understood. Support plans are written from the child's perspective and provide thoughtful guidance to the staff in meeting their needs. Staff enjoy writing and reading these plans, using them as a point of reference throughout each child's visit to the home. This ensures that practice is child led and highly individualised to their needs.

Children's health needs are prioritised. Staff receive training to equip them with the necessary skills to undertake healthcare tasks and manage the safe administration of children's medication.

Children behave well because they are happy and engaged. They receive a high level of support and attention from staff, who know them extremely well. When incidents occur, these are analysed to ensure that triggers can be understood and strategies reviewed to support the child. As a result, incidents with children are rare.

On occasion, a physical intervention is required to manage a child's behaviour, but this is non-restrictive in nature. Records of these interventions are clear and fully evaluated by the manager within the correct timeframe.

Staff are confident in their safeguarding knowledge and responsibilities. Any injuries or unexplained marks on a child are clearly recorded and explored by staff, and there is an efficient system in place to escalate any concerns to external safeguarding professionals. All staff receive extensive training in safeguarding with timely refreshers to ensure that they remain aware of current safeguarding issues, such as child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation.

Communication in the team is good. However, the manager is always striving for improvements. Staff keep updated through detailed handovers, communication books and the monthly team day. Children are discussed in depth, and information is disseminated among the team members. Staff use part of this day to work on new projects together, such as updating the information on the children's notice boards.

Link workers are empowered to take the lead role, acting in a parental capacity and advocating for the child. This enables them to establish close relationships with the families and professionals connected to the child's care. One parent talked about how

supported she feels by staff, describing them as 'the other parent', and about being able to talk things through and bounce off ideas together to work in partnership supporting her child to progress.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager leads the staff team with skill, diligence and enthusiasm, instilling an aspirational attitude in the team, which enables the children to thrive. He leads by example, being visible and supportive to the team and using his extensive knowledge of the children to guide the team.

The manager continually strives for excellence. He draws on the skills of the team, encouraging creativity and innovative practice in developing the service. For example, staff have introduced a new interactive communication system, which is helping the staff and children to increase their use of augmented communication systems. This empowers the children to communicate and influence their care.

The statement of purpose has been simplified and it clearly sets out the home's ethos and its aims and objectives. Staff deliver care led by these expectations, which ensures that the children have exceptional experiences and the highest standard of care.

Professionals are complimentary about this service. One social worker said that the quality of partnership working has enabled her to get to know the child well. A deputy headteacher commented, 'Our parents really rely on [name of home]. They could not manage without such a valued resource.' She went on to say, 'If we could have a service three times as big, they could fill it. I think they are excellent.'

The manager is now fully established in his post. With the support of his deputy and senior staff, various projects are under way to improve the service. This includes simplifying medication systems and the children's plans without compromising the quality of recording, which is meticulous. The team is embracing change, understanding that these developments allow them more time to focus on the children.

Management monitoring is robust and highly effective. Recommendations made by the independent visitor, while rare, are welcomed and acted on by the manager without delay. The manager sets out areas for development through identifying his 'next steps' and has a constant desire to excel as a child-led service.

The staff team is highly experienced and knowledgeable. New staff have felt welcomed through a supportive programme of induction, mentoring and supervision, enabling staff to feel valued members of the team. Staff reported excellent team morale, which is led by the enthusiasm and commitment of leaders and managers.

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 address: Wokingham Borough Council, Shute End, Wokingham
RG40 1BN

Responsible individual: Jasmine Grimshaw

Registered manager: Anthony Waite

Inspector

Joe Davys, social care inspector

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