

SC409506

Registered provider: Bedford Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home, which is run by the local authority, provides short breaks and respite care for up to 32 children who have physical and/or learning disabilities, and/or complex health needs.

The manager has been registered since August 2017.

Inspection dates: 20 to 21 February 2020

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 7 March 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/03/2019	Full	Good
26/09/2017	Full	Good
15/12/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
09/08/2016	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children continue to make excellent progress because of their experiences during their short breaks. They have built secure, positive relationships with a skilled and dedicated staff team.

Staff understand the children's individual communication needs. They use the Picture Exchange Communication System to communicate with the children effectively. The staff adapt their style of communication to suit each child, so as to provide individualised and positive interactions.

Children enjoy a wide variety of activities both in the community and at the home. The staff took some of the children on holiday to Norfolk during the summer of 2019. A parent said that she could not believe that her child was able to go. The parent said that the staff were amazing and put so much work into making it a positive experience.

During the inspection, children attended a music session during which a musician came with many different instruments that the children could play, including some sensory instruments. The children and staff clearly enjoyed the activity.

Transitions into and out of the home are managed well. A lot of thought has gone into ensuring that children and their families are fully involved in the transitions. A parent said that she was able to go at her own pace, and that her son was able to have several visits before his first overnight stay. The parent said, 'For the first time we could relax, knowing that he was safe and well cared for. It's made such a tremendous difference to our and his life.'

Children are very much at the centre of the home. Their views and wishes are listened to and acted on. The deputy manager writes to the children in response to their requests, to let them know the outcome. Children know that their views are valued.

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

The children's comprehensive placement plans provide the staff with guidance on how to meet their individual needs. Risk assessments are informative, and are reviewed and updated when needed. These assessments provide clarity for the staff on the risks that children face and how to keep the children safe.

The staff receive regular training to equip them with the information and skills that they need to work with the children well.

Due to the children's limited understanding, the staff do not use sanctions. Instead, the staff use positive reinforcement to help the children to understand acceptable behaviours. The staff praise children when they have done something well.

The home has safeguarding and confidential-reporting policies in place. However, these policies are unclear, and fail to identify the designated safeguarding lead and how to report concerns. Consequently, the staff cannot rely on the policies to guide them accurately.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Partnership working between the manager, deputy managers and external professionals is effective. As a result, the management team and other professionals who are involved in the children's care share information well, which enables them all to work in the best interests of the children.

The deputy manager uses research-based practice to support the staff to work with the children effectively. The staff have been given individual responsibilities for specific areas of practice. This enables them to develop their skills and share their learning, and contributes to staff retention.

The children are clearly at the centre of this service. Parents and professionals spoke highly of the management team and said that the managers and staff go above and beyond expectations to provide good-quality care.

The staff either hold or are undertaking a relevant level 3 qualification.

The manager has met the two requirements and one recommendation made at the last inspection.

The manager has not sought information from external agencies to inform the location risk assessment, and has not included the potential risks to children if they go missing from the home. Despite the high levels of staff supervision, this lack of information reduces the protective factors intended by the location risk assessment.

Recruitment checks are not comprehensive. The managers do not record clearly when checks have been verified and if supplementary questions have been asked, such as when references are not informative.

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 recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. (Regulation 32(1))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that verification of identification and references is clearly recorded.</p>	10/04/2020
<p>The registered person must prepare and implement a policy which—</p> <p>is intended to safeguard children accommodated in the children's home from abuse or neglect; and</p> <p>sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect.</p> <p>The procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect must, in particular—</p> <p>provide for liaison and cooperation with any local authority which are, or may be, making a child protection enquiry in relation to a child accommodated in the home;</p> <p>provide for the prompt referral of an allegation about current or ongoing abuse or neglect in relation to a child to the placing authority and, if different, the local authority in whose area the home is located;</p> <p>describe how and to whom staff are to report, without delay, any concern about abuse or neglect of a child. (Regulation 34(1)(b)(2)(a)(b)(f))</p>	10/04/2020

Recommendations

- The children's guide should help children to understand the day-to-day routines of the home, and what care they can expect to receive while living at the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph 4.22)

- The location review should include the identification of any risks and opportunities presented by the home's location and strategies for managing these. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.1)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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: Bedford Borough Council

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

Responsible individual: Martin Purbrick

Registered manager: Alexander Milligan

Inspectors

Trish Palmer, Social Care Inspector

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