

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 children aged between eight and 17 with learning and/or physical disabilities.

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

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspection of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

Inspection dates: 30 June to 1 July 2021

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: 10 December 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/12/2019	Full	Outstanding
18/03/2019	Full	Outstanding
13/02/2018	Full	Outstanding
22/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The staff deliver consistently high standards of care to children with complex care needs. The children are at the centre of all practice and there is a culture of respect and dignity evident in all staff practice. The extremely effective multi-disciplinary working approach provides children with exactly the right level of care needed for the short periods of time that they use the service.

The children's positive experiences start from the very first time that they stay. Link workers create care plans that are easy to read, detailed and include photos, providing the staff with precise images of how best to meet the children's medical needs. These plans are formulated with the direct input of parents and carers. This joined-up working means that the children benefit from continuity and an approach consistent with the care that they receive at home. It also gives parents and carers reassurance that their child is being cared for in a way that is agreed by them. This helps reduce parents' anxieties as their child settles into regular overnight stays.

The children enjoy a wide range of recreational opportunities, including the well-equipped sensory room, open space soft play, an art room and lots of toys, puzzles and games. The environment with regards to cooking and laundry facilities does, however, pose access difficulties for children who use wheelchairs. The outside wooden cabin needs repainting and the children's bedrooms lack soft furnishings, such as headboards for their beds, and bedside lighting.

The staff have created toyboxes and toy storage featuring the children's Picture Exchange symbols to help them in choosing a preferred toy or activity. This promotes the children's understanding of what is available to them and encourages them to use their communication systems to initiate play. This is enhanced by the staff's detailed understanding of each child's own preferred communication methods. By expertly reading the children's behaviours, body language, gestures and behaviours, the staff break down potential barriers and champion children's voices.

Link workers find out children's preferred activities through consultation with the children, their parents and carers. Staff note and record in detail the children's enjoyment or dislike of new activities in the home and when going out, to get a clear picture of their preferences. The recent renovation of the children's sensory room was based on this practice, which is indicative of the staff team's desire and drive to provide enjoyment and stimulation to aid every child's growth and development.

All children attend local special schools. Staff work closely with educational colleagues to share information about the goals, achievements and progress that the children are making. All the children have personal education plans and records are kept of recent annual reviews, and any changes to shared plans such as health or

behaviour are also included. The children's educational achievements are enhanced through a culture of a total learning environment where skills learned are applied to everyday living. Individual education targets are unique to each child.

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

Staff endeavour to ensure that each child is introduced to the home at a pace that they can cope with. The staff are very sensitive to the need for careful planning of admissions, particularly when bearing in mind each child's learning difficulty, health needs and ability to understand change. This practice enhances each child's feelings of safety and security.

The staff manage the children's complex emotional and behavioural needs well. They help the children to regulate and cope with their strong emotions when they find situations difficult. The staff work closely and transparently with parents and professionals to gain insight into the children's needs. The children's positive handling plans mirror strategies and techniques used in the children's educational settings. Plans have been further adapted to meet the children's needs when visiting the home. This joined-up way of working helps the children to feel safe and cared for in a consistent way.

The staff understand children's individual needs and vulnerabilities and do all they can to protect them from harm. The staff are confident in the processes to follow should they be concerned for a child's safety. Children do not go missing, due to the high levels of support and staffing numbers. The registered manager has a positive relationship with the local authority safeguarding officer and consults with them regularly following any safeguarding concerns, raised either in the home or by parents.

Staff are aware that, due to their learning difficulties, some of the children may not have the cognitive ability to understand what a formal complaint is. However, the staff are aware of how each child communicates and how they may show their displeasure in their own individual way. The staff put forward the children's complaints in a timely way and in their best interests. Managers are receptive and listen to children when they have something they would like to change. This means the children are empowered to communicate their worries and fears and feel listened to. As a result, children are motivated to make a difference in the home, regardless of the frequency of their stays.

Assigned staff complete regular checks of the premises and safety equipment, such as fire alarms and hoists. Fire drills take place regularly. Each child has a personal emergency evacuation plan which addresses their learning difficulties and need for assistance if they have to be evacuated in an emergency. Link workers have adapted the plans where necessary to include detailed night-time procedures, especially for children who receive overnight medical care.

Staff store the children's medication appropriately and administration records show no errors. However, on the day of the inspection, staff did not follow the correct procedures when signing in a child's medication and chose to dispense medication outside of the designated area. This incident did not have a direct impact on the quality of care delivered to the children, but these shortfalls did present unnecessary risks. The staff were quick to identify their own mistakes and the registered manager took immediate action to limit any further recurrences. This practice of self-reporting errors ensures the children's safety is paramount and feeds a culture of learning from mistakes.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home remained open during the pandemic except for three days, to allow for staff testing following a child being in direct contact with a person showing symptoms of COVID-19. Staying open ensured that the children and their families received a consistent and invaluable short-break service. The registered manager spoke openly to the inspector about the staff team's tremendous efforts in working collaboratively and dynamically during this time to minimise any negative impact on the children.

There is a strong and highly effective management team, fully supported by a committed and experienced staff team who work together extremely well. The registered manager consistently sends out positive messages to the staff and communicates high expectations about sustaining improvement. He routinely makes good use of a range of rigorous monitoring activities relating to the quality of care, which results in improved outcomes for the children. The targets for development of the service are realistic and fully involve the whole staff team.

The registered manager knows the strengths and weaknesses of the home and speaks passionately about delivering excellent care to the children and helping them to achieve their outcomes. He works consistently with professionals to ensure children are at the centre of practice. On one occasion, together with an education provider, he organised moving and handling training for school staff. This meant that the child received a consistent handling approach across the settings and enabled the school staff to continue to safely support the child's positive handling plan. This example demonstrates the registered manager's commitment and passion in working in the best interests of children and securing the best outcomes for them.

The staff speak positively of the support they receive from managers, both professionally and personally. Staff progress into more senior roles and are supported with tailored development plans to gain the relevant training and experiences they need. Individual link workers attend specialised training for their link children to ensure they can fully meet their health, social and communication needs. In one example, a link worker is due to attend 'on body signing' training to support a child's total communication needs.

The registered manager ensures that new staff are safely recruited and have the skills to care for children. The inspector did identify one shortfall in one member of

staff's recruitment process, where gaps in employment history had not been fully scrutinised. This was prior to the registered manager's employment and before regulatory changes in 2015. This omission has not had a direct impact on the quality of care provided to the children, but it is a missed opportunity to ensure all staff records evidence effective recruitment practices.

The registered manager has been working determinedly to produce a new medication policy. Managers have created new knowledge-based questions and quizzes and the staff will be supported with new observation rounds so managers can assess their competencies. The registered manager plans to address any shortfalls or gaps in staff's knowledge through these observations and staff supervisions. The registered manager has consulted with many medical professionals, including general practitioners and local pharmacies, to ensure the new policy meets the required guidelines and legislation. He has also spoken with other registered managers outside of this local authority to gain a deeper insight and knowledge into how other provisions manage their medications. This demonstrates the registered manager's strong commitment to work collaboratively and sustain the highest quality of care for the children.

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 make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children’s home. (Regulation 23 (1))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that all staff follow the home’s procedures for the receipt and administration of the children’s medication.</p>	<p>5 October 2021</p>

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the design of the home should, where appropriate, enable children to develop independence skills within the supportive environment of the home, including through encouraging their independent use of kitchen and laundry areas. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 17, paragraph 3.25)
- The registered person should provide a nurturing environment that is welcoming and supportive and should seek to meet the child’s basic needs in the way that a good parent would. In particular, consider improvements that would enhance the premises, such as the repainting of the cabin and the provision of headboards, bedside tables and a lamp in bedrooms, where risk assessment permits. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 15, paragraph 3.7)
- The registered person should consider conducting retrospective recruitment checks, such as of gaps in employment histories, to ensure that good employment practice is maintained. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 61, paragraph 13.1)

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: SC030713

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Wokingham Borough Council

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

Responsible individual: Jasmine Grimshaw

Registered manager: Anthony Waite

Inspector

Kelly Monniot, Social Care Inspector

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