

# 2592700

Registered provider: Slough Children First Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This service primarily offers residential short breaks for children who have learning and/or physical disabilities. In exceptional circumstances, the home may provide known children with an extended or full-time care package. The home provides care and accommodation for up to four children.

The registered manager position has been vacant since September 2021.

This is the first full inspection for this service.

### Inspection dates: 6 to 7 October 2021

**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      outstanding

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

**Date of last inspection:** Not previously inspected

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** Not applicable

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** Not applicable

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Children are cared for by compassionate staff who truly understand the vulnerabilities and needs of children. Staff invest time in getting to know the children, their needs and their personalities. Children enjoy staying at the home and benefit from staff making them feel welcome. For example, if they like a particular character or colour, staff make sure that the appropriate duvet cover is on the bed, and the toys and sensory items that the child likes are in their room when the child arrives. This gives the child a sense of belonging and that staff care about them and their experience when staying at the home.

The children's achievements and celebrations are showcased throughout the home. For example, photographs of a birthday celebration are on display and art and craft work is put up on the walls. Children's religious and dietary needs are fully met which enables all children to take part in activities and celebrations. This also helps children to better understand different faiths, traditions and customs, which further enhances their learning and enjoyment.

Children are given relevant information according to their communication needs, including how they can raise concerns. There are plenty of opportunities for children to explore their experiences or worries. For example, they have regular children's meetings and key-work sessions. Children enjoy time with their key workers and benefit from trusting relationships. One child's love of drawing enables him to communicate and explain how he is feeling. As a result, his thoughts and worries were shared with his family and he has received essential emotional support.

The staff and managers ensure that children are listened to, heard and what they have to say is acted upon. For example, children have chosen colours for the new sensory room, and they are involved in the recruitment of new staff. This creates a home where children enjoy coming to stay and feel part of the decision making.

The children have access to a wide range of activities, both inside the home and in the community. For example, children enjoy shopping trips and visiting play activity centres. Some children, before attending this short break service, could not manage in the community or engage socially with anyone outside of the home or family. One child is now able to go into a shop, make choices and communicate with staff in the shop appropriately. As a result, this child enjoys increased time with his family, enjoying activities in the community.

The staff are realistic in their ambitions for the children. The children have targets set that are achievable and measurable and that will improve their daily lives. For example, they learn to brush teeth or make their own bed. Children are proud of their achievements, and parents are complimentary about how staff are supporting their children to be able to continue achieving in the family home.

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

Children are encouraged to take age-appropriate risks, dependent on their needs, understanding and disability. For example, one child is supported by staff to use an electronic media device. As a result, the child is exploring new programmes and interests that he can share with his family.

The staff promote and reward children's positive behaviour. When children behave in a way that others may find challenging, it is managed in an appropriate way that the child understands. Staff recognise the triggers to the children's behaviour and how children express their feelings. As a result, staff use the de-escalation techniques effectively and very few incidents have occurred. However, learning from one incident identified the potentially harmful impact of children overhearing staff discussions. Consequently, staff are mindful of the whereabouts of children, and no further incidents have occurred.

There has been one occasion of a child leaving the home without staff being aware. The action and subsequent investigation by the manager have identified some learning and how to better safeguard children. As a result, staff's awareness of children's movements at night has improved. It is now extremely unlikely children will be able to leave the home without staff being fully aware.

Recruitment of staff is thorough. However, this has not been without minor errors. This has not had an impact on the children, and a thorough review of staff employment procedures has been completed. The use of non-permanent staff is currently supporting the staffing arrangements of the home. Adults covering shifts are familiar with the children's needs, and all necessary checks have been undertaken. This helps to protect children from harm.

Health and safety processes are good. The excellent oversight of the administration of medication and record keeping enables the manager to identify any specific training required for staff. This is acted upon swiftly. As a result, staff are competent to meet the health needs of all the children accessing the short break service.

The staff team have good working relationships and excellent communication with other agencies. Effective sharing of relevant information has enabled some children to receive additional services. Swift and appropriate actions from the service help to safeguard children where there are concerns.

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

The manager is currently in the process of registering with Ofsted. The manager is well known to staff and children, having worked in the home for many years. She has realistic ambitions for children and high expectations of staff.

Managers and leaders enable staff to provide consistently good services for children and their families. Feedback from parents is positive and appreciative of the care their children receive and the support they are provided. Consequently, children

enjoy coming to stay at the home, and parents know that their children's needs are fully met.

The provider thoroughly embeds any learning into practice. There is a thread of accountability and responsibility throughout the management team. Leaders and managers make necessary adjustments to ensure that the welfare of the children and staff is maintained.

Leaders and managers have effective monitoring and quality assurance systems. Strengths and weaknesses are identified and where necessary, remedial action is taken. For example, supervision has improved because of this monitoring. Staff receive regular, reflective supervision. Staff who have been unable to be at work during the pandemic have returned to work, supported by empathic managers. As a result, children have continuity in the care they receive from well-managed staff.

The staff have completed all mandatory training. The manager uses information from staff meetings and assessments of children to identify further training needs for staff. Children are cared for by knowledgeable and informed staff who can fully meet their needs.

The independent visitor provides an additional layer of scrutiny to the management team. The recommendations they make are responded to with reflectivity, challenged where appropriate and opportunities to learn from them identified. In addition to this, the manager's own six-monthly review of the quality of care highlights the areas for continued development. However, this review does not always capture the evidence and analysis needed to ensure clarity of the actions required and who should carry them out. This has been identified by the new manager as an area to develop further.

## **What does the children's home need to do to improve? Recommendations**

- The registered person should ensure that they decide what each review of the quality of care should focus on. The review should enable the registered person to identify areas of strength and possible weakness in the home's care, which will be captured in the written report. The report should clearly identify any actions required for the next six months of delivery within the home and how those actions will be addressed. The whole review process and the resulting report should be used as a tool for continuous improvement in the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.4)
- The registered person should ensure that they are responsible for the positive relationships which are characterised by consistency and unconditional positive regard for the child on the part of the carer. In particular, that children are not witness to staff discussions that could cause distress. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 21, paragraph 4.3)

## **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:** 2592700

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

**Registered provider:** Slough Children First Limited

**Registered provider address:** Observatory House, 25 Windsor Rd, Slough SL1 2EL

**Responsible individual:** Brent Lumley

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

## Inspector

Jill Sephton-Wright, Social Care Inspector

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