

# SC409502

Registered provider: Bedford Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This local authority home provides short breaks and respite care for children with physical and learning disabilities and complex health needs. The home can care for up to five children at any one time.

The manager registered with Ofsted in January 2016.

### Inspection dates: 22 and 23 November 2022

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b>	<b>good</b>
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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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:** 20 July 2021

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/07/2021	Full	Good
12/02/2020	Full	Good
27/02/2019	Full	Good
15/08/2017	Full	Good

## Inspection judgements

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

There are currently 34 children accessing the service on a rotational basis. The children have a wide range of physical and learning needs. Some of the children have medical conditions that require daily medication. Staff have a comprehensive understanding of the children's individual needs. Staff respond promptly if a child is unwell, contacting parents and medical professionals. Parents feel confident that their children are well cared for and that their health needs are supported.

The house is decorated with children's photos, communication symbols and seasonal decorations. Children's bedrooms are personalised with bedding that they have chosen, and staff encourage children to bring in items from home. The garden is spacious, with areas for sensory play, a bug hotel, seasonal herbs and sand and water play. The recent addition of a pathway leading to a racetrack for wheelchairs has further enhanced the outdoor space. Children benefit from staying in a homely environment in which they can explore and play safely.

Staff support a range of activities to provide the children with new experiences. These have included a barge trip, shopping, visiting an ice cream parlour, bowling, sensory disco and trips to the zoo. One parent said that her child loves visiting the home, calling it her 'sleepovers' and saying that staff always do fun things with her.

Children have developed trusting relationships with staff. The staff know the children well and can communicate with them using the children's preferred method of communication. The long-established staff show genuine warmth and affection towards the children. One professional said, 'The staff work well together, it comes naturally to them. They work like a well-oiled machine.'

Staff encourage the children to share their wishes and feelings in a variety of ways. 'Voice group' meetings are a forum in which children plan things that they would like to do. Children have access to an online communication app and 'you said we did' sessions. An independent advocate visits the home. This inclusive approach to gathering children's views helps children to feel listened to and that their views are important.

Parents and professionals speak very positively about the care that children receive. One parent described the care as 'phenomenal'. Another parent said that staff 'concentrate on the children', and they know their likes and dislikes. Professionals said that the children always look happy and relaxed.

Staff have good links with the children's schools. They communicate daily with school staff to ensure that the children's medication and specialist equipment, such as nebulisers, are always available for the children. Staff accompany children on the journey to and from school. The bus driver is a member of staff. This ensures that

children have continuity of care throughout their stay from people who are familiar to them.

Staff visit the children at school and work with school staff to learn ways of communicating with children. For example, a non-verbal child with a visual impairment is learning to 'body sign'. Staff are also learning to 'body sign' and learning the child's individual preferred signs. This ensures that all staff can communicate consistently and meaningfully with children.

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

Staff have an excellent understanding of how to keep children safe. They are fully aware of their responsibility to protect children from abuse and report anything of concern. The manager is committed to ensuring that staff's safeguarding practice is of the highest standard. Safeguarding is discussed at every staff meeting and in staff supervision. Two members of staff are trained as safeguarding champions. They have frequent meetings with the local authority safeguarding social workers to develop their knowledge and understanding of safeguarding protocols. They share this knowledge with staff in handovers and team meetings. The manager has an effective system for monitoring any incidents or injuries. Information is shared with parents and professionals without delay.

The manager has reviewed the 'body map' recording and reporting system, in which staff record and describe any mark on a child's body, no matter how slight. The manager has identified that records need to provide more detail and oversight, and she is developing a new system. She is currently researching bruising in non-mobile children and has approached the community nursing team to deliver staff training.

Children's stays are exceptionally well planned, with impact assessments completed for each child. The assessment ensures that children stay with their school friends or friends that they have made during their stays. Detailed planning ensures that children enjoy each other's company and that there are no incidents of bullying.

There have been no incidents of physical restraint or self-harm since the last inspection. Staff have an exceptional understanding of children's needs and know how to support them if they are upset. Staff can identify whether children are happy or sad by the sounds or gestures that they make. One parent said that she has such confidence in the staff's ability to keep her child safe that she was able to enjoy an overseas holiday herself.

As children's confidence and independence grow, staff encourage them to take developmentally appropriate risks. One child has recently transitioned from sleeping in a high-sided cot bed to a bed. This transition was planned over several months, as the child has used the cot bed for many years. Staff worked with the child's parents and external professionals to develop the risk assessment. This included providing additional night staff in case the child found it hard to settle. The meticulous planning worked, and the child is now using a bed. This has had a

significant impact on the child's bedtime experience and will support her as she moves to adult support services.

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

The managers are strong advocates for children. They have excellent communication with the children's families and professional networks. Managers ensure that any decisions made in respect of children are planned, well thought out and in the children's best interests. Managers offer flexibility of stays to support children, while ensuring that children benefit from staying with others in their friendship group.

Staff contribute to the successful running of the home and feel valued and respected. They have regular supervision sessions and attend monthly staff meetings. This supports them to work consistently with each other and to provide good-quality care for children.

Staff use the child-friendly children's guide to help children understand what they can expect from their stay. The guide is available in three versions. Staff match the most suitable version to the child's individual communication needs.

Staff record wide-ranging information about the children's stay. Parents say that communication is excellent. They receive written feedback, phone calls and photos. Professionals said that staff and managers are excellent communicators, always attending meetings and sharing information promptly. Excellent recording and information-sharing provide a clear account of the child's stay.

Children's records do not consistently contain their most recent education and healthcare plans. This gap in information prevents staff from having a full understanding of the children's educational and health needs and progress.

External monitoring supports the manager to make improvements at the home. However, the independent person has not consistently sought a full range of views from parents. Parents' views are crucial, given the children's complex needs.

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

### **Recommendations**

- The registered person should ensure that all children's case records are kept up to date. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)
- The registered person should ensure that any individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person makes a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for promoting the welfare of the children in the home's care. In particular, ensure that the views of parents and carers are sought. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.5)

### **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:** SC409502

**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:** Sally Summers

## Inspector

Paula Lewis, Social Care Inspector

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