

# 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 six children with physical and/or learning disabilities and/or complex health needs.

The manager registered with Ofsted in August 2017.

### Inspection dates: 1 and 2 August 2023

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b>	<b>outstanding</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	outstanding
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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:** 11 July 2022

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/07/2022	Full	Outstanding
23/06/2021	Full	Good
20/02/2020	Full	Good
07/03/2019	Full	Good

## Inspection judgements

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

At the time of this inspection, 21 children were accessing this short breaks service.

The staff provide outstanding care to children. They show understanding, kindness and patience when supporting the children. Children have complex communication needs and the staff use extremely creative ways to help children express themselves and make choices. Staff build trusting relationships with the children, and this empowers children to have a voice. Children's wishes and feelings are held in high regard and are actioned. The manager models to the staff the importance of advocating for children. Overall, children feel safe, loved and valued.

Children take part in an abundance of activities. One member of staff is an activity champion and helps two children coordinate parties and activities. The two children are proud of their roles and represent children's views about their activities. Children visit the seaside, enjoy theatre trips and have visits from farm animals and magicians. One child made a short song, to tell the activity champion how much fun he had. During the inspection, staff and children were observed singing, dancing, playing music and dressing up together. Children have fantastic opportunities to try new activities, which improves their self-esteem.

The managers and staff have hosted a 'butterflies and bugs' event at the home. The children and their families attended and decorated bird boxes. The managers linked with the community participation team, and children in the local area, to develop a sensory garden in the community. The children have contributed food and taken it to the local foodbank for people in need. There is a real sense of family and community spirit.

The staff actively encourage friendships between the children. Children who have not been able to form friendships previously benefit from meaningful friends for the first time. Since making friendships, some children have play dates when they are not accessing respite care. Two non-verbal children have built a bond through their love of nature. They enjoy walking and picking flowers together. Children write friendship notes to each other and in celebration of their friendships.

Parents said that staff and managers are brilliant, and they cannot fault the excellent care the children receive. Managers and staff are making a real difference to their families' lives. If parents are struggling, staff provide home visits to help parents and find creative ways to support the parents to overcome challenges. Staff go above and beyond to support parents. Parents feel able to reach out to the staff for support.

The manager and staff host coffee mornings for parents. The staff support parents to attend. One parent said, 'This has given me a support network, and I have

developed new friendships as well as my child.' Parents meet, share their experiences and create new support networks.

Children are well prepared to move in and on from the home. Moves are very gradual and child led. At the time of inspection, one child is being closely supported by his keyworker to move on from the home. This well-planned move has been informed by research. Vital information was provided to new carers and his adult social worker to inform his care plan. The new carers have shadowed the staff at the home to build a relationship and understand the child's needs. This has ensured that the child has a bespoke placement to meet his needs. The social worker said, 'Without the staff and managers input, the bespoke home would not have been secured.' Children have positive experiences moving in and from the home.

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

There have been no safeguarding concerns at the home. The manager ensures that allegations outside the home are dealt with promptly and effectively. On several occasions, the manager has professionally challenged other professionals. On one occasion, this led to an independent investigation into the behaviour management at school. Taking these actions keeps children safe, and demonstrates how seriously the manager takes safeguarding concerns.

Social workers, parents and the local authority designated officer (LADO) are impressed with the staff's safeguarding curiosity, knowledge and practice. The LADO has delivered bespoke safeguarding training. They said, 'The manager's knowledge around safeguarding children with disabilities is invaluable to the decision-making process.' Staff and managers, who take effective action, have an excellent understanding of how vulnerable children with disabilities are, and this helps to ensure that risks are minimised.

There have been no missing-from-care incidents. The staff have excellent relationships with the children, who benefit from high staff ratios and close supervision. On one occasion, a child went missing from the family home. The manager invited local police to deliver training to the staff, to ensure that their knowledge was up to date and to highlight the risks to children. Being proactive and refreshing staff's knowledge means that the staff are well equipped should a child go missing from care.

There have been a small number of low-level appropriate physical interventions. Staff and children are debriefed, and staff reflect and find creative ways to reduce these physical interventions. One child struggled with anxieties at evening settling time. The staff met with the child's parents and the child. A creative evening routine was developed that includes the child having a cup of tea with night staff. This helped the child process the change of staff. Understanding the cause and finding creative ways to manage the child's anxiety have led to a significant reduction in physical interventions.

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

The manager is an inspirational leader and demonstrates strong ambitions for the children. The manager is supported by two experienced and competent deputy managers. The manager appropriately challenges other professionals and advocates on behalf of children. The manager is tenacious in ensuring that any decisions and plans are in children's best interests.

Staff said that the managers are 'inspiring', they love working at the home and that it is like a second home to them. Staff feel fully supported and said that managers have excellent relationships with the children. The managers regularly spend time with children and will always make time for staff. The deputy manager has created individual well-being plans for staff as she understands the importance of staff well-being. Staff feel listened too, committed and motivated to deliver exceptional care to children.

Staff receive excellent training, which is bespoke to meet children's individual needs. The deputy manager has delivered in-depth autism training for the staff that incorporates children's specific processing needs. This training informed staff practice. The staff have introduced talking mats to children with complex communication needs in order to capture their views. Most staff have a relevant level diploma or are working towards this. Staff are eager to learn, and they implement highly effective strategies. The excellent outcomes for children illustrate this. Staff understand children's complex needs and feel empowered to deliver excellent care.

The deputy manager champions research in practice. The staff also become confident in independent research to inform their work, and activities for the children. The managers incorporate different methodologies to staff supervision sessions, induction and training. Children are taking part in activities that can improve their skills and cognitive functioning. Staff understand and explain different research approaches. They are confident in implementing these to consistently benefit children's care experiences.

The manager has submitted their internal monitoring report to Ofsted, as required. The report is generally of good quality and includes feedback from children and parents. However, the report does not include feedback from staff or professionals, and actions from the previous report have not been evaluated.

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

### **Recommendations**

- The registered person should undertake a review that focuses on the quality of the care provided by the home, the experiences of children living there and the impact that the care is having on outcomes and improvements for the children. The report should include feedback from staff and professionals and all actions set should be evaluated. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.2)

### **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:** Bedford Borough Council, Borough Hall, Cauldwell Street, Bedford MK42 9AP

**Responsible individual:** Christian Weatherley

**Registered manager:** Alexander Milligan

## Inspector

Amy Miles, Social Care Inspector

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