

1229977

Registered provider: Oxfordshire County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is operated by a local authority. It provides care for up to six children who need an assessment of their needs and/or require shared care arrangements. The provider also offers outreach support for children and their families.

At the time of the inspection, three children were living in the home.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since October 2018.

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 November 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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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: 16 January 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16/01/2023	Full	Good
05/01/2022	Full	Good
10/03/2020	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
28/10/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children are provided with exceptional care. They build secure and trusting relationships with staff, who make them feel valued and cherished. Relationships between children and the staff support the children to thrive.

Children make exceptional progress at the home, and this has a positive impact on their lives. One child said, 'Staff are so good at knowing me and helping me. They help me understand a lot about risks and my biggest achievement since starting here is not doing drugs anymore.'

Children are given the opportunity to engage in a range of activities, for example, swimming, beach trips, playing pool and going on holidays. All children enjoy toasting marshmallows around the firepit in the home's large garden. Children have ample opportunities to learn independence skills, such as how to cook, budget and shop for food. This provides children with essential life skills.

The home is welcoming and is designed in a child-centred way that gives children places to spend time together or to be on their own if they wish. There are separate areas in the home to meet the needs of children and for them to meet with their families. These include a sensory room, lounges and an art room. Staff talk proudly about making the home as welcoming as possible.

Children's views are sought regularly and are highly valued. Staff listen to children and support them to influence the way they are cared for. For example, one child spoke about going shopping with staff to choose things for their bedroom. This included LED lights, posters, a wall tapestry and glow-in-the-dark bedding. This helps to give children a sense of belonging, even though they are only at the home for a short period. A visiting advocacy service provides further opportunities for children to make their wishes and feelings known.

Children are cared for by a dedicated and stable staff team. Staff are highly skilled, proficient and sensitive to the specific needs of each child who moves into the home. For example, one social worker said staff contacted them to see what a child's favourite cake was. This was made for them, ready for when the child moved into the home. Staff work closely with multi-agency professionals and engage with and support early reunification assessments to directly inform children's longer-term care planning. This demonstrates that children's best interests are at the forefront of all decision-making. All children move on from the home in positive and planned ways, in accordance with their plans.

Staff work closely with medical professionals and have access to a neurodevelopment condition team when required. Staff are highly responsive to recommendations made by this specialist team. This further enhances the

assessments of children, ensuring that plans reflect and consider their individual needs.

Children are well supported with their education and staff advocate and challenge other professionals as needed, to ensure that children have access to educational provision.

Children's achievements are celebrated through individual incentives and certificates. Staff support children to feel valued, using a 'motivational quotes board'. Furthermore, children have 'kindness jars', and staff write down when children have been kind and thoughtful; the comments are shared with children in 'catch-up time'. Photos of children are displayed throughout the home and in beautiful memory books. This helps children to feel positive about themselves and enhances their self-esteem.

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

The registered manager and staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and ensure that they work together with other professionals. Incidents are managed extremely well, and necessary actions are taken to ensure that children are safeguarded effectively.

Staff are proactive in the local community when children go missing from the home. In one example, staff worked with local shopkeepers, who put in specific measures when staff inform them that a child has left the home. This joined-up working has significantly reduced risks to children. This has helped to reduce missing-from-home incidents.

Staff confidently understand children's risks and manage them meticulously by supporting children to understand the dangers and the impact on their health. Physical intervention to manage children's behaviour is not used frequently, and the use of consequences is rare. However, some incident records are not always completed fully. The registered manager acknowledged this shortfall and instigated changes at the time of inspection to address this.

Strategies to help keep children safe are clearly set out in children's individual risk assessments, which are reviewed frequently. Furthermore, children are supported to identify their own behaviours and triggers, and how staff can support them to feel safe through detailed safety plans. One child said, 'Staff have really helped me. I can now calm down by going for a walk or taking a bath.'

Safe recruitment practices are in place. This ensures that suitable individuals work at the home and provide care for children. Senior staff are aware of their responsibilities to ensure that effective health and safety processes are in place.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is managed by leaders who are well respected by all who work with them. They display unwavering passion for providing the best possible care for children and this influences the staff in the home. Staff are proud of their contribution in helping children to succeed. This means that the children are provided with excellent care from staff, who have a genuine commitment to achieving the best outcomes for them and who want children to flourish.

The registered manager is enthusiastic, passionate about the quality of care provided to children and knows the strengths and weaknesses of the home. They have an effective development plan for the home that identifies relevant actions to improve the quality of care provided to children. Senior staff model excellent practice, ensuring high expectations of care for children. Children are cared for consistently in line with the home's ethos and statement of purpose.

The registered manager and staff have highly valued relationships with other professionals, who consistently praise them for their sophisticated communication skills and their commitment and aspirational approach to caring for children.

Staff consistently say that they are very well supported by the registered manager and senior staff and enjoy working in the home. Staff receive regular and effective supervision that is further enhanced by regular team meetings and reflective space with the clinical team. This helps staff to feel fully supported in their roles and with their continual professional development. Furthermore, new staff are motivated throughout the induction and probation process. This gives staff a sense of being appreciated and valued. Consequently, staff morale is extremely high.

Staff are provided with a balance of online and face-to-face training. They are trained to understand and respond to the needs of the children. For example, they receive training in areas such as transgender issues, restorative practice and trauma-informed care. Learning from this training is embedded in practice. Staff are given opportunities to develop their skills even further, and leaders and managers are forward thinking and fully consider succession planning. Training arrangements for staff are exceptional. For instance, staff can request additional training to enhance their skills further, and senior care staff work towards achieving a level 5 diploma.

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

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that all incidents are subject to systems of regular scrutiny. In particular, that staff complete reports in full. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.36)

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: 1229977

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Oxfordshire County Council

Registered provider address: Oxfordshire County Council, County Hall, New Road, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX1 1ND

Responsible individual: Sarah Duerden

Registered manager: Catherine Partlett

Inspectors

Hannah Cox, Social Care Inspector

Thobekile Bandama, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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