

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: 11 and 12 March 2025

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: 1 August 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/08/2023	Full	Outstanding
11/07/2022	Full	Outstanding
23/06/2021	Full	Good
20/02/2020	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

There were three children staying at the home during inspection. All of the children were spoken to. Twenty-one children currently access the service. There are extremely positive relationships between the children, the staff and managers. The staff are highly attuned to the children and their communication styles. Children are comfortable at the home. Staff ensure that children's preferred activities are set up for when they arrive. This creates a personalised, welcome environment for children to enter.

Children are clearly the priority. The staff provide regular consultations with children to gain their views. Children often write to the manager with their requests. The manager responds to children, to ensure that they know their views have been heard. Staff fully support children to express their views, ensuring that all children's wishes and feelings are heard.

Professionals are extremely positive about the home. They describe the home as being 'absolutely invaluable' and a 'fantastic resource that provides person-centred experiences'. Parents and carers are highly complimentary about the home. One carer said, '[Child] has very complex needs and can be very challenging, and they understand this. They are very supportive towards me as well and will help in any way they can.'

Staff support children to develop friendships. Managers and staff carefully think about which children have similar interests and needs when planning stays. Children express who they would like to stay with. This shows that children's social skills and opportunities are promoted.

Staff offer children a wide range of activities. Some children enjoyed a successful holiday last year. This gave them a chance to try new things and create some lovely memories. There is a therapy dog, who visits regularly. This was arranged based on children's wishes to have a dog at the home. Some children love spending time with the dog. Staff plan stays so the children who like dogs are there when the dog visits. All children are offered activities suited to their needs and interests. However, there is no vehicle at the home, which can limit the opportunities for some children. While staff are creative in using different means of transport, some children are unable to access these as easily as others. Having their own vehicle would increase opportunities for all children to enjoy spontaneous activities.

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

Incidents do not happen regularly. Restraints are few and are proportionate in their use. There is clear management oversight following incidents. Staff use clear, detailed monitoring systems to identify any patterns or trends with incidents. Parents and professionals are updated promptly following any incidents. Staff are inquisitive in debriefs to consider potential triggers for incidents.

Children's plans and risk assessments are detailed and individualised. The plans are comprehensive and include theory to underpin the information. The plans contain strategies for staff to follow when working with the children. Children review their plans when suitable. Photos are used throughout the plans to make them very child focused and a pleasant document to read and get to know the children.

Any allegations against staff are reported and investigated effectively. Appropriate and prompt referrals are made to the local authority designated officer following these allegations. Managers work closely with the professionals who are involved with the child who made the allegations. Managers have considered the theory and research behind allegations. This means they have shown professional curiosity in exploring the theory and research relating to the case to best support the child.

There have been two medication errors. Neither of these impacted on children's health. Following the errors, there were thorough investigations. Medication systems have been adapted to prevent further errors. The staff involved completed reflective logs. These helped the managers to understand the concern and what staff have learned from the error. All the staff team were spoken to in a team meeting about medication, to ensure that staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. The actions taken were extensive and meticulous to ensure that learning was identified and implemented.

Staff support children to develop their knowledge in a range of areas. They use preventative work to support children's knowledge. This shows forward thinking by staff to best support children's needs. Topics such as internet safety, road safety and medication have been discussed with children. There are child-friendly resources available for staff to use when talking to children. Staff are proactive in supporting children to understand possible risks to help safeguard them.

Staff attend meetings for children. They work closely with professionals, including healthcare providers. Staff advocate for referrals to be made to mental health services when they feel this would benefit the child. Staff follow the advice and guidance that professionals provide.

Safer recruitment checks are undertaken. There is a stable staff team. When temporary staff are used, these are staff who are known to the children. This ensures that children are cared for by people they know and who understand their needs. New staff receive a comprehensive induction to help them learn their roles.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is experienced and dedicated to providing a high level of care to the children who stay. The manager is supported by two equally committed deputy managers. The management team has a culture of high aspirations for the children and the staff. They are always striving to improve the care offered to children and ensure continual development is happening throughout all areas of the service being provided.

Staff members are positive about the support they receive. They are highly motivated and committed to their roles. The staff members talk about the children with care and pride. The staff feel privileged to look after the children who stay at the home. This attitude has a positive impact on children's experiences. Children's families trust in staff caring for their children.

Staff have their own roles and responsibilities. This ensures that there is creative and innovative thinking about all aspects of care. One staff member has been redecorating an area of the home. The children agreed what the theme would be. The new 'Candyland' area is a bright vibrant area for the children to visit during their stays.

The staff benefit from monthly yoga sessions. It was identified that staff morale could be improved. Yoga sessions were introduced for children and staff separately. Staff have enjoyed the opportunity to engage in the yoga sessions as a team. This shows that staff's well-being is promoted as well as children's.

Managers and staff support children's families and carers. Regular coffee mornings are held to give parents a chance to attend and spend time with the staff and each other. Summer parties are held. These generate a great turnout and provide a celebratory experience for children to spend time together and with staff and professionals. The party included exciting activities for the children, including a bouncy castle, face painting and a visit from a princess. This was a wonderful opportunity for children and their families to have fun and make memories.

Staff supervision sessions and team meetings take place regularly. During these meetings, managers discuss the children to ensure the staff are all aware of any changes or updates from their recent stays. Reflection is used during supervision sessions to support staff to identify positives and areas for development. This shows there is a learning culture throughout the team, whose members want to always adapt and develop.

Staff receive appraisals of their performance. However, these are limited and there is no feedback from professionals, colleagues, or children as part of these appraisals. This reduces opportunities for staff to reflect on their practice and identify areas for development.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure all children have appropriate opportunities to take part in activities based on their personal preferences and abilities. There should be equal opportunities for children to go into the community on activities. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 31, paragraph 6.4)
- The registered person should ensure that all staff have their performance and fitness to carry out their role formally appraised at least once annually. This appraisal should consider, when reasonable and practical, the views of other professionals who have worked with the staff member over the year and children in the home's care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.5)

Information about this inspection

The inspector has 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

Leanne Lyon, Social Care Inspector

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