

2517299

Registered provider: Buckinghamshire Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and operated by the local authority. It provides care for up to five children who may experience social, emotional or mental health difficulties.

At the time of this inspection, five children were living at the home.

A new manager was appointed in July 2025 and is planning to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 September 2025

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	good
---	------

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

Date of last inspection: 18 June 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/06/2024	Full	Outstanding
05/07/2023	Full	Good
09/11/2022	Full	Outstanding
06/10/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last inspection, one child has been helped to successfully move on to semi-independent living. Three children remain living in the home and are settled. Two children have moved into the home. In one instance, a child's social and emotional needs exceeded the anticipated level of support. Managers and staff demonstrated a commitment to caring for the child; they worked closely with the multi-agency group of professionals to keep the child safe. As a result, the child has stability and is beginning to respond to support and intervention.

Children receive support from staff who are caring and know them well. Staff understand that children can express their emotions through their behaviours, and they offer guidance and encouragement to help them explore their feelings.

Staff help children make progress using a clear approach that is tailored to their learning needs and personal journey. Managers and staff encourage children's learning and development while remaining realistic about the challenges they face. Small steps forward are acknowledged, which gives children the confidence to try new things.

Support for children to access education is proactive, with some children making good progress. One child who was previously not attending school now goes regularly. One child achieved beyond expectations in their GCSEs. When children experience difficulties being offered a school place, managers advocate for them to have access to education that will best meet their individual personalities and needs.

Children's health needs are well understood. Managers ensure that medical professionals investigate complex health conditions and consider all possible treatments. For some children, this is an ongoing process. In the meantime, children are helped to understand their condition and cope with it practically and emotionally.

Children are helped to experience and enjoy a wide range of activities. Staff are effective at cultivating children's interests and helping them participate in ways that will build their confidence and self-esteem. For example, two children have performed at school for parents' evenings.

The home is welcoming with plenty of space where children can enjoy a range of activities. This enables children to choose whether they would like to spend time on their own or with other children. Managers have ongoing plans to enhance the home, including repair and redecoration of children's bedrooms.

Children have been helped to develop positive relationships with staff and each other. However, changes to the staff team since the last inspection have been unsettling for children and have affected the continuity of the care they receive. Children feel worried about forming relationships with staff in case they leave.

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

Staff understand the risks children face and respond to them proactively. They have taken extensive measures to protect one child who is at significant risk from exploitation. This is an ongoing piece of work. Managers and staff have demonstrated their understanding of the child by continuously adapting their approach and working closely with the professional team to agree safety plans in the child's best interests.

Staff manage incidents effectively to enhance children's safety. When children go missing from home, staff respond by trying to locate them, informing the relevant professionals and seeking help. Managers and staff understand the complex factors affecting children and talk to them about ways to stay safe. When serious concerns have arisen for the child, there has been a robust coordinated response from the professional network to ensure that the risks are monitored and reduced as far as possible.

There have been occasions when children have been held for their safety. Managers review restraint records to ensure that restraint has been necessary and proportionate. Afterwards, children have a restorative discussion to reflect on what happened, help them understand the feelings they are experiencing and develop strategies for managing their emotions. This approach has proven to be effective, as there has been a low level of restraints.

Managers take children's allegations seriously and take action to safeguard them. They liaise with professionals and investigate what happened. When there are concerns about staff practice, managers take disciplinary action and are clear with staff about the expected standards of care. Managers work with staff to learn from incidents and improve future practice.

Staff use restrictions to keep children safe from unhealthy behaviours. However, there are no records explaining the rationale behind the restrictions or how they will be reviewed. Furthermore, restrictive practices have not been formally agreed with the professional team. For example, all children's snacks are kept in the office. Individual arrangements for each child have not been considered. This means the restriction in place has an unfair impact on other children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is knowledgeable about the home's strengths and areas for development. They have reflected on the challenges of being a new manager and implementing new systems for an established team. They have worked hard to maintain a good standard of care planning and oversight of safeguarding to ensure that children benefit from a home where staff care and put them at the heart of all they do.

Professionals say that staff and the manager communicate well, that children's transition planning is good, and that they are pleased that children have been able to settle and make progress. They see that staff know children well and care about them.

The organisation has a home therapy team that supports children and staff. Management has used its expertise to consider how the team has been feeling and whether children have been affected. Managers have guided staff in understanding how to support children in making high-risk choices, which has enabled the staff to respond consistently and has contributed to the children beginning to respond. Staff say they feel supported and appreciate the bespoke training that has been implemented to help them understand and adapt to children's complex needs.

Following the last inspection, a new manager has taken responsibility for overseeing the home. Both the manager and staff report this was a difficult time, and the team has not felt fully connected. Many staff members have left to progress their careers in the organisation, and some staff members working at home are also due to move on soon. In addition, not all staff are supervised by the current manager. This has affected how strongly the members of the team work together.

Managers tried to minimise the impact by moving staff in stages; however, they have noticed that the team is less cohesive, and they say that communication has sometimes been difficult. This has been recognised by senior managers, who have actively sought independent support for staff, introduced changes to future plans for staff continuity and made joint decisions to change the management team.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; and feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and	31 December 2025

use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(d)(e)(f)(g)(i)(ii)(h))	
---	--

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that any decisions to limit a child's access to any area of the home, and any modifications to the home, are only made where this is intended to safeguard the child's welfare. This includes ensuring that restrictions required for one child do not affect others, keeping clear records of why restrictions are in place, and ensuring that case managers are in agreement with arrangements. Additionally, the views of the child, dependent on their age and understanding, should be sought and understood. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10)

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: 2517299

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Buckinghamshire Council

Registered provider address: Chief Executive, Walton Street Offices, Walton Street, Aylesbury HP20 1UA

Responsible individual: Laura Armstrong

Registered manager: Zoe Brooks

Inspector

Shirin White, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025