

2750673

Registered provider: Belsteads Retreat Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

An independent provider runs this home. It offers care for up to 4 children aged between 8 and 17 with a learning disability or sensory impairment.

The home registered with Ofsted in December 2023. The manager registered at the same time as the home.

There is a registered school on the same site as the home. The inspector only inspected the social care provision at this site.

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 January 2026

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 11 June 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/06/2024	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

There were 4 children living in the home at the time of this inspection. Since the last inspection, 3 children have moved in and one child has moved out. One child spoke to the inspector.

Children appear happy and settled in the home. Positive interactions were observed between children and staff, demonstrating the strong relationships they have built and the nurturing environment provided.

Children are making good progress across a range of areas. One parent said that their child's vocabulary has increased and that they have improved emotional regulation. Social workers noted significant development in independence, communication and social interaction. One child is now able to express when they are unhappy to their social worker, a skill they had not previously demonstrated. Another child's social worker said that they have made significant progress, and this was commented on by a judge when applying for a deprivation of liberty order. These examples demonstrate that children are supported to develop practical, emotional and social skills that enhance their daily lives.

Staff understand the importance of education and support children to engage in learning. All 4 children are currently accessing education. Staff take a proactive and creative approach to ensure engagement. For one child who had been out of education for a sustained period, staff devised imaginative strategies to re-engage them. Their parent and social worker commented that they had not expected the child to engage with learning in this way. Another child is making progress in British Sign Language, with staff supporting their learning sessions. As a result, children are developing new skills and enjoying positive learning experiences.

Staff support children to maintain and rebuild relationships with people who are important to them. For one child, staff supported their contact with someone they had not seen for several years. This person commented that the home feels like a family, and staff ensured they were involved in everyday activities and special occasions. They said that staff created a welcoming and inclusive environment. This support has helped the child strengthen meaningful relationships and experience a sense of belonging and emotional security.

Staff actively support children to develop and maintain positive relationships with each other in the home. One child spoke to the inspector about difficulties they had been experiencing with another child's behaviour. Staff worked collaboratively with the wider professional network to provide additional support and guidance. As a result, there has been a reduction in incidents. Children are now able to manage their interactions and maintain positive relationships with each other. This contributes to a calmer, more supportive home environment and helps children develop important social skills.

Children take part in a wide range of activities that promote enjoyment, engagement and positive memories. Recent experiences include a holiday, seasonal celebrations and days out to new places. Memory books have been created for children to reflect on these moments.

While staff actively advocate on behalf of children, none of the children currently have access to an independent advocate. This has not yet been formally considered. Three children are approaching adulthood and preparing to transition to adult services. Having access to independent advocacy would help ensure that their views and wishes would continue to be heard and considered.

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

Children benefit from effective and consistent behaviour management that helps keep them safe. Staff manage incidents calmly and follow children's individual plans to reduce risk and prevent escalation. They know the children well and understand the actions needed to support them appropriately. Management review of significant incidents for 2 children shows a clear reduction over time. This demonstrates that staff interventions are effective. As a result, risks are reduced and children are protected.

Children are safeguarded through the proportionate and appropriate use of physical intervention. Physical intervention is used only as a last resort to prevent harm and keep children safe. Records are detailed and include management evaluation. Debriefs take place with both staff and children following incidents. This ensures that practice is reflective and monitored effectively. This also provides children and staff with an opportunity to learn how to manage similar incidents differently.

Children are supported to develop safer behaviours and make positive choices. Regular key-work sessions help children understand risks and explore strategies to manage them. Staff use positive reinforcement consistently to encourage appropriate behaviour and support emotional regulation. As a result, children are increasingly able to make safer and more positive choices.

There have been no incidents of children going missing from home. Plans are in place that outline the actions staff must take if a child were to go missing. Staff know what these actions are and feel confident in following these procedures. This ensures that, should such a child ever go missing from home, the correct steps would be taken immediately to safeguard them.

There are clear processes in place to support staff to raise safeguarding concerns, including whistleblowing arrangements. Information is displayed in staff areas to guide staff on the actions to take if they have concerns. However, when asked about this, staff responses were inconsistent. This indicates that not all staff are fully confident in these procedures. This could result in safeguarding concerns not being addressed promptly or appropriately.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Children benefit from confident, consistent and effective leadership. A long-standing, experienced and appropriately qualified manager leads the home with clarity and purpose. The manager is ambitious for children and sets high expectations for staff to improve outcomes and transform children's lives. This strong leadership ensures that practice across the home remains consistently focused on children's progress and wellbeing.

Leaders and managers have exceptional oversight of practice. Information is used effectively to improve outcomes. All incidents are reviewed promptly and thoroughly, enabling leaders to identify patterns, evaluate staff responses and take decisive action to improve outcomes. Reviews of incidents for 2 children demonstrate highly effective learning from practice. For one child, leaders identified that incidents coincided with refusal to take prescribed medication. This was addressed through targeted key-work sessions, which led to improved engagement with medication and a significant reduction in incidents. As a result, risks were reduced and the child's safety and emotional wellbeing improved.

Staff benefit from regular consultation with an independent clinical psychologist. They provide specialist therapeutic insight into children's needs and practical guidance to improve practice. The psychologist highlighted that the staff team members are highly child-focused and know the children exceptionally well. They noted that staff are eager to learn and apply new strategies, including developing skills such as signing and understanding a child's inner world. This has strengthened communication and relationships. This specialist input supports staff confidence and professional development, contributing to consistently high-quality care and positive outcomes for children.

Leaders and managers promote a strong culture of reflection and continuous improvement. They use oversight, analysis and learning from incidents to strengthen practice and prevent future risks. Workforce development is well planned, with clear training goals and opportunities to grow skills in the team. Leaders focus on creating a positive working culture where staff feel valued, motivated and supported. This helps retain skilled staff and ensures children experience stability and consistency in care.

Partnership working is a key strength. Leaders have developed highly effective relationships with social workers, education professionals and families. Leaders and managers provide appropriate challenge to partner agencies to ensure children receive the highest quality of care. For example, they challenged the local authority regarding transition planning for one child, ensuring the child's views were heard and incorporated into decisions. Feedback from professionals is consistently positive and reflects clear communication and collaboration. This shared approach strengthens understanding of children's needs and ensures care is coordinated across agencies. As a result, children receive seamless, joined-up support that helps them make excellent progress.

Staff feel highly supported, valued and motivated. The manager operates an open-door approach and actively encourages staff to share ideas and contribute to improvements in the home. One staff member described feeling confident to suggest changes and valued for their contribution. Regular, reflective supervision sessions and well-attended team meetings further support staff development, shared learning and consistency. This focus on workforce development ensures children receive safe, stable and high-quality care from a confident and well-supported team.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure all children have access to appropriate advocacy support, and where possible, this should be provided by a person who the child chooses. Looked-after children are entitled to an independent advocate to advise them and ensure they have the support needed to express their views, wishes and feelings about their care and lives. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 23, paragraph 4.16)
- The registered person should ensure that, as part of the policies for the protection of children, they include information about whistleblowing, with clear procedures for how a staff member should report to an appropriate authority any concern they have about a child in the home being either at risk of, or already experiencing, significant harm. The policy should reflect the principles set out in Sir Robert Francis' 'Freedom to Speak Up' review. The registered person should ensure that all staff are familiar with these procedures. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.15)

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: 2750673

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Belsteads Retreat Ltd

Responsible individual: Peter Adams

Registered manager: Esther Graham

Inspector

Emilja Myers, Social Care Inspector

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