

SC013598

Registered provider: Cherry Trees Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The service is registered for 14 children who have a wide range of learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities as well as sensory impairments. The home is owned by a charitable organisation and provides overnight short breaks on a planned basis.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since May 2019.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 15 December 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on our website.

Inspection dates: 13 to 14 April 2021

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	outstanding
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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: 29 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: Good

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/01/2020	Full	Good
08/10/2018	Full	Good
06/12/2017	Full	Good
06/02/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

'Children first, disability second' is the mantra of this home and this is evident in practice. Children have a happy, enjoyable time during their short break with staff keeping them as safe as possible. Staff support children in the activity of their choice. Staff help them make the right choice, such as in healthy eating.

Children have positive relationships with staff and enjoy being in their company. Children have pet names for some staff members and are confident to approach any staff when they are upset or angry. Staff are quick to sort out minor squabbles, such as a child taking another child's toy.

All staff demonstrate a genuine love and care for children. Staff are passionate about their role and they go the extra mile to support the children. For example, the chef baked 100 Christmas cakes and sold them to raise money for additional equipment to benefit children. In another example, a staff member visited children's homes to deliver Christmas presents.

Children make good progress over the course of their short breaks. They can develop their speech from a few words to a full conversation. They develop self-confidence. They can dine with others from the starting point of eating on their own. One child has made significant progress in making the transition into the short break from a starting point of high anxiety.

Staff encourage children to develop independence skills, for example wiping a dining table after eating, serving drinks and assisting with the vacuuming. Children benefit from their own kitchen facilities where they can learn to cook as well as learn about health and safety.

Staff maintain the home to a good standard, keeping it exceptionally clean and well presented. Children appreciate the artwork on their bedroom walls and enjoy using the same room each time for their short break. The registered manager is aware of the need to review locks on all doors, such as the sensory room, to ensure that they have a thumb-turn type mechanism so children can vacate the room if necessary. Senior leaders have clear development plans, such as replacing furniture and indoor play equipment, and further landscaping the garden.

The registered manager ensures that staff are trained in medication administration. Staff are diligent in fulfilling their responsibilities in making sure that children receive the right medication at the right time. Consequently, there has only been one minor medication error since the last inspection. However, the medication procedures do not include direction to staff as to how the right temperature/humidity to store medicines is achieved. Staff do not routinely consult health professionals when administering medication in food, when this has been established practice, to ascertain that this is not detrimental to the medication. The storage of controlled drugs is not in strict accordance with the relevant regulations. The independent visitor has recently identified some of these shortfalls.

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

The approach to safeguarding is excellent. Senior leaders consider safeguarding across all areas of practice. They work with others to agree strategies to keep children as safe as possible, ensuring that the control measures are implemented in full.

Staff demonstrate a thorough understanding of safeguarding and are aware of the vulnerabilities of children with a disability. Staff report promptly any concerns to the relevant people, for example if they observe marks on a child. This prompts an investigation/explanation for such marks. Staff are meticulous in keeping safeguarding records, for example, to evidence how they are following safety plans. The registered manager has the necessary systems in place to maintain an overview of safeguarding. This includes regular meetings with other senior leaders within the charity.

Staff are diligent in identifying risk and making any changes to the environment to minimise risk. They incorporate effective risk management strategies into behaviour management plans. Children who may present with high-risk behaviour can access the short break service.

Key staff have effective systems in place to ensure that children are appropriately matched during their short break. They communicate the arrangements for transport effectively, including who is authorised to pick children up after their visit.

It is worthy to note that staff have carefully considered the impact on children when managing the risk of COVID-19. Staff carried out specific risk assessments to evaluate how children would react to certain control measures, such as having their temperature taken. They considered how children might communicate symptoms of the virus, for example, through behaviour. The measures taken have been effective. The provider has maintained a service throughout the pandemic without any outbreaks of COVID-19.

The registered manager ensures that staff have additional safeguarding training for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), for example in specialist signs and symbols for children to communicate their concerns. A staff member said this was a very useful course to help her safeguard children with severe communication difficulties. Children also benefit from a mental health advocate who is alert to any emerging needs.

The registered manager is passionate about safer recruitment. She ensures that only adults deemed to be suitable to work with children are employed. She has systems in place to check ongoing suitability, especially regular checks through the disclosure and barring service update system.

A senior safeguarding professional commented in the highest terms of the safeguarding practice, saying, 'the safeguarding report was exemplary, thorough, the areas of improvement identified, the learning identified and the actions put in place to avoid such an incident in the future.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Staff morale is high. Staff retention is excellent. Staff speak in the highest of terms about their training. They say that their management team supports them well. Staff continue to see children's ability and not disability, ensuring that the children enjoy their short breaks. The home's catch phrase, 'children first, disability second', is embedded in staff practice.

Staff prepare well for any new children coming for a short break. They involve the child and write a social story for children who may find the transition difficult.

Staff develop excellent relationships with parents. The staff go the extra mile, such as providing hot meals, additional overnight stays and books for brothers and sisters. They provide additional support during difficult family circumstances, such as a bereavement of a close family member. Parents say that staff communicate well and do not put them under any pressure. They describe the short break service during the pandemic as a 'lifesaver'.

Placing social workers describe their relationship with staff as positive. They say that they can raise any issues. One social worker described her satisfaction about the measures that staff had put in place to keep the child safe.

Staff have excellent relationships within the wider community. Fundraisers keep the vision alive. This is a well-known and much-loved provider within the local community. This is reflected in the generosity of donors despite the challenges during the pandemic.

Leaders and managers have demonstrated excellent leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. They have been diligent in keeping the control measures in risk assessments in accordance with government guidance. Strategies have been successful with the short break service remaining operational during the pandemic with no signs of infection.

Care planning is excellent. Staff work with other professionals to agree risk management plans so that children, for example children with self-injurious behaviour, can access their short break. Placement plans are of high quality, and they are in a simple format to clearly guide staff in how to meet the needs of children.

The registered manager archives records securely. However, she does not have an indexing system, which makes retrieval difficult should this be necessary for children who have accessed the provision in the past.

The independent visitor provides high-quality reports, identifying the pertinent issues and providing professional challenge. The registered manager welcomes this monitoring to drive forward continuous improvement. Equally, the registered manager completes the statutory six-monthly reports to Ofsted, ensuring that she identifies the action points for the forthcoming period.

The registered manager promotes learning about equality and diversity. She recognises national days and wider global events, such as International Women's day. Staff support children to do activities, such as art, to celebrate these days. Key staff write a weekly column in the local newspaper about a disability. They deliver an inclusion education package in schools.

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, 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 registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. (Regulation 23 (1))	30 June/2021

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children's case records be kept for 75 years from the date of birth of the child, or if the child dies before the age of 18, for 15 years from the date of his or her death. In particular, ensure historic records are indexed to enable easy access. (Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards, paragraph 14.3, page 62)

Information about this inspection

Ofsted conducted an assurance visit on 15 December 2020. No serious or widespread concerns were found.

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: SC013598

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Cherry Trees Limited

Responsible individual: Mark Clement

Registered manager: Paula Rankin

Inspectors

Keith Riley, Lead Social Care Inspector
Vevene Muhammad, Social Care Inspector

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