

SC030677

Registered provider: West Berkshire Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is run by a local authority and provides short breaks for children with physical and learning disabilities. The home is registered to provide care for up to six children.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since August 2020. At the time of inspection, the manager had been away from the home for an extended period. There is an acting manager in post.

There were no children staying at the home during the inspection.

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 September 2023

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

Date of last inspection: 30 March 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/03/2023	Full	Good
18/05/2021	Full	Good
24/02/2020	Interim	Not judged
19/06/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children enjoy fun, positive experiences during their short-break stays at this home. Children's visits are spent in an environment that is welcoming and well maintained. There are many photos displayed throughout the home showing children engaged in fun activities and on outings with staff. The children's artwork is also displayed. These pictures and photos are likely to contribute to children experiencing a feeling of belonging during their stay.

Children's parents and social care professionals said that the service provided by the staff is invaluable to the children and their families. One parent said, 'The staff are amazing' and do a 'fantastic job' in meeting all their child's needs. Their child thoroughly enjoys their stays at the home.

Children's parents and social care professionals are complimentary about the quality of care provided by staff. The staff support the children to make great individual progress. For example, one child who previously would not sleep in their own bed, now sleeps in their own bedroom at their family home, thanks to the support from staff. The staff help children develop their independence skills and they make marked progress. One child is now able to make their bed and will choose what they would like to eat, which they did not previously do.

Staff work effectively with parents. They consult parents regarding their child's care and ensure parents are provided with regular updates. Staff also work well in partnership with other professionals to ensure that the children's needs are well met. They attend and contribute to care planning and education meetings. Staff set realistic targets for children, in line with those set by education professionals. This has allowed the children to have consistent, focused support across the different settings they attend.

Staff use communication aids to explore children's wishes and feelings. The staff help the children learn how to make choices. For example, they choose their bedding, meals and activities.

While staff are mindful of children's disabilities and vulnerabilities, they ensure that children are supported to safely enjoy new experiences. The home is equipped with different spaces, activities and apparatus for the children's enjoyment. These include a sensory room and a garden featuring a sandpit, slide, swings and trampoline. One parent said that their child loves their stays at the home because they see it as a sleepover with friends.

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

Children are cared for by staff who they share positive relationships with. Children's needs are well met during their stay in the home. Children's support plans provide a

good understanding of their needs, including behaviours they may present with. There are clear strategies in place that guide staff to appropriately support the children.

Children do not go missing from the home. However, there are protocols in place which guide staff on actions to take should children go missing. Staff support children by their nurturing approach. They seek to understand the messages children communicate through their behaviours. Staff are skilled at de-escalating tricky situations and supporting children to calm without using restraint. Consequently, there have not been any incidents involving the use of restraint since the last inspection.

Parents and social care professionals are confident that children are safe and well cared for by staff. The staff ensure that they actively seek, and act on, children's views. Children with additional communication needs are supported to express themselves and to exercise their choices using Makaton, choice boards and activity books. This helps the children to feel that their views matter and that they are valued.

The home has specialist equipment to support staff to appropriately meet the children's particular needs. These include specialist beds, hoists and a sensory bath. Staff ensure that the equipment is regularly serviced to ensure its continued safe use.

Safer recruitment pre-employment checks are consistently carried out. This helps to ensure that only suitable applicants are employed to work in the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has a good understanding of the needs of the children. She closely monitors the progress children have made by working alongside the staff caring for them. The manager has promoted a culture of positive reinforcement. Staff are encouraged to praise children for their achievements. A 'wow board' in the lounge displays certificates children have been awarded. This helps children to develop a sense of pride and has the potential to influence further progress.

The manager is keen to ensure that children are supported to have a voice. She has influenced a culture of staff proactively exploring how children are feeling and encouraging them to make choices. This has led to children developing confidence and exercising their right to make decisions in other settings, such as their family homes.

Staff are provided with training to ensure that they are able to meet the children's complex health, mobility and communication needs. This includes specific training in feed management, managing epilepsy and Makaton sign language. Staff are further guided on caring for the children through discussions during team meetings and supervision sessions. Staff say that they are well supported by the manager and their colleagues. However, staff training and supervision records are not up to date.

The manager has supported staff to progress to senior roles. The staff enjoy working at the home.

The service is greatly valued. However, there have been instances when a child's stay at the home has been cancelled or rescheduled, reportedly due to lack of staff. The manager is currently undertaking a recruitment drive to fill staff vacancies.

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— ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; and ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(d)(e)) In particular, ensure that there is a sufficient and stable staff team in place to minimise the risk of disruption to the service.	20 November 2023

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that records demonstrate that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs, and that they understand the key role they play in the training and development of staff in the home. Records relating to staff supervision should also be kept up to date. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)

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: SC030677

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: West Berkshire Council

Registered provider address: Victoria Park Children's Centre, Newbury RG14 1EH

Responsible individual: Jane Seymour

Registered manager: Michael Garrity

Inspector

Sasha Reid, Social Care Inspector

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