

SC030677

Registered provider: West Berkshire Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and run by the local authority. It provides short breaks to children and young people who have physical and/or learning disabilities. The home is registered to provide care for up to six children and young people.

Inspection dates: 27 to 28 February 2018

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: 14 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- Exceptional work is done with children to help prepare them for adulthood. The staff work hard to help children to develop new skills and to become as independent as possible.
- Close partnership working between staff, parents and colleagues from the wider network contributes to consistent behaviour management practice in the home.
- Creative scrapbooks capture children's journeys through the home. Photographs with comments show children participating in a wide range of activities while having fun.
- Safeguarding is embedded into practice. Only staff with the relevant skills knowledge and experience work at the home.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Records of a fire drill demonstrate that the staff did not follow the correct evacuation procedure; staff and children did not assemble in the designated meeting area, and one member of staff re-entered the building before it was considered safe to do so.
- Children's case files do not reflect the quality of work undertaken in the home. Files sampled were disorganised and key documents were not up to date.
- Monitoring arrangements in the home are not fully effective. Managers had not identified a shortfall in children's case records.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
21/06/2016	Full	Good
18/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
20/10/2015	Full	Good

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 ensure, by means of fire drills and practices at suitable intervals, that persons working at the home and, so far as reasonably practicable, children are aware of the procedure to be followed in case of fire. (Regulation 25 (1)(d))	31/05/2018
In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. (Regulation 45 (2)(a)(b)(c))	31/05/2018
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(b)(c))	31/05/2018

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children benefit enormously from their short breaks. Child-focused staff practice means that the needs of the children are put first. This includes children who access the service for the first time. For example, introductions to the home are done at the child's own pace to help them become familiar with the surroundings and to get to know the staff. Parents described having their initial fears of leaving their child alleviated during this process. They feel that the staff accepted their child for who they are but also encourage them to be independent.

The introduction of an innovative programme to help the older children to prepare for adulthood is proving to be very successful. Skilled staff focus their attention on helping the children to develop new skills and to become as independent as possible. Taking a fun approach, children of all abilities are included, as staff help them to overcome barriers and give them the same opportunities as their non-disabled peers. One young person spoken to during the inspection said, 'I love it here; I get to be independent.'

Dedicated staff go to great lengths to capture a child's journey through the home. A scrapbook is used to record the children participating in activities and learning new skills. This is particularly helpful for non-verbal children, as the books can be shared with key people in their lives. For example, photographs, certificates and staff comments provide very visual evidence of what the children have been doing and their reaction to it. The information also includes children's strengths and good news stories. One record seen by inspectors belonged to a child who has been using the service for four years.

Regular coffee mornings that are organised by staff for the parents help to guide them through the moving-on process. Talks from guest speakers provide parents with advice and guidance on a range of subjects, including legal matters, benefits, colleges and adult services. Parents described this as invaluable as it helps to alleviate their anxieties and to look at transition more positively. This programme has also influenced the wider network of professionals who are keen to hear from parents about how to improve their services for young adults.

Children's plans provide a good overview of their needs and the strategies that will be used to meet them. This includes their overall aims and objectives. However, while the plans are useful documents, work is under way to improve them further. A senior member of staff is working closely with parents to identify targets that will link to the independence programme and incorporate education, health and care plan (EHCP) targets. During the inspection, it was acknowledged by staff and managers that goals are not always written in a meaningful way.

Everyone who was spoken to, including the children who were staying at the home at the time of the inspection, said that children love attending the service. The staff work hard to make the experience fun. This includes planning activities, accommodating friendship groups on the same night and giving the children choices. Because of this, the children have excellent relationships with each other and with the staff and enjoy their company.

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

Staff files are well maintained and provide evidence of good recruitment practice. Pre-employment checks are routinely carried out, and only staff with the relevant background and experience are employed to work at the home. A comprehensive induction process follows appointment; this includes a checklist for staff to work towards, before managers evaluate their learning and sign them off as competent. This is further enhanced with a training programme that contributes to the staff's continual professional development.

A well-trained staff team is adept at managing behaviour that challenges the staff. Working closely with education colleagues and parents, considerable effort is put into understanding the reasons behind negative behaviour. One recent example included staff supporting a child whose behaviour had deteriorated to the extent at which he was excluded from school. The home provided extra overnight care while work was done to establish a possible reason for the behaviour. During this time, the staff implemented

consistent strategies, which included reinforcing communication to help the child to understand what was happening. Since this time, his behaviour has improved significantly and incidents have decreased.

Health and safety arrangements are managed and maintained well. The actions taken by the staff in response to a fire in the home ensured that no one came to any harm. A letter from the fire and rescue service after the incident commended the home's investment in fire safety measures and procedures and thanked the staff for their helpful efforts. However, records of a fire drill after this incident evidence that the staff did not follow the correct evacuation procedure on one occasion. This included re-entering the building before it was considered safe to do so and not assembling at the designated meeting point. It was unclear at the time of the inspection what action had been taken by the registered manager to ensure that all staff know what to do in the event of a fire and what lessons had been learned from this.

The location risk assessment contributes to keeping the children safe. Consultation with relevant agencies has resulted in a well-written document that recognises the children's vulnerabilities in the local environment. Hazards include road safety, stranger danger, rivers, lakes and railway lines. High levels of supervision, competent staff and a good understanding of the children's needs reduce these risks significantly. All of this prevents the children from going off unsupervised and being in a situation in which they do not have staff support.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

A suitably qualified and experienced manager and deputy work closely together to ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the home. They are passionate about the quality of care that is delivered to the children and they both regularly work shifts to role-model good practice. This is well received by the staff and the children who value and benefit from their input. Their hands-on approach demonstrates a commitment to striving for excellence and has led to many of the positive developments that have been achieved within the service. Parents spoke highly of the registered manager and credit her with keeping the team together through a period of change within the organisation. Parents also appreciate the support that the registered manager provides to see them through difficult periods with their children.

Feedback from other professionals commends the practice of the leaders and managers. A social worker described the good working relationships that exist between them and said that managers attend children's reviews. She also said that the information the home provides is very detailed and clearly shows the progress the children are making in relation to their goals. An education colleague agreed with this and added that a great deal of effort is put into working together to share strategies to ensure that the children receive consistent care.

Through her direct work on shift, the manager has good oversight and is able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the home. However, in the absence of a system for monitoring, this information is not collated in one place. Because of this, not all shortfalls

are identified. For example, leaders and managers did not identify the shortfalls in children's case records. Files sampled during the inspection were not well organised and did not contain up-to-date plans for children. Documents did contain hand-written amendments made by the staff, but dates and signatures were missing. This made it unclear when the changes had occurred and who had made them, which could result in confusion. However, despite this, the impact on children was minimal due to the staff knowing and understanding their needs well.

Previous independent visitors to the home did not provide the level of service expected by the manager. Action was taken to address this, including appointing a new independent visitor, which has helped to improve the monitoring arrangements. The reports of the visits now provide a very good analysis of the home and help managers to keep track of minor gaps in records. As the manager is keen to help develop the service further, plans are in place for the visitor to meet with leaders and managers to agree future arrangements.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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 address: West Berkshire District Council, Council Office, Market Street, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 5LD

Responsible individual: Jane Seymour

Registered manager: Sara King

Inspector

Amanda Harvey, social care inspector

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