

SC030677

Registered provider: West Berkshire Council - Social Care

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home provides short-break services for children with physical and learning disabilities. Operated by the local authority, the home is registered to offer overnight stays for up to 6 children at any one time. A total of 23 children currently access the service.

Three children were staying at the home at the time of the inspection.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since October 2024.

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 January 2026

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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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 highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 18 March 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/03/2025	Full	Outstanding
26/09/2023	Full	Good
30/03/2023	Full	Good
18/05/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children who visit the home receive exceptional, highly individualised care that significantly enhances their life chances. Staff understand each child's complex needs in depth and provide nurturing, skilled support that promotes children's dignity, rights and independence. The ethos of the home is firmly rooted in children's rights, and this is consistently evident in the sensitive and respectful way that staff deliver personal care.

The home offers a well-equipped sensory room, therapeutic bathing facilities, occupational therapy input, peer interaction and opportunities to participate in the local community. Staff prioritise children's wishes and organise personalised activities, such as a child with complex needs enjoying their first cinema trip, to another completing their 'wish list' over the summer, to a child accessing regular karaoke sessions at the home.

Children make remarkable progress, taking into account their starting points. Their achievements have a tangible, positive impact on their daily lives. For example, children have made significant gains in personal care, leading to greater independence at home and in their communities. Parents report that children return home with newly developed skills and receive clear guidance from staff to help sustain this progress. Children's achievements, no matter how small, are celebrated with pride through certificates, displays and communication with families.

The warm, calm and consistent approach of staff helps children to settle quickly and to build trusted relationships. Transition plans are highly individualised and paced according to each child's needs. 'Tea visits' allow children to experience the environment at their own pace, ensuring that their first overnight stay is positive and well-managed. For example, one child felt confident to stay overnight immediately after visiting with parents, while another required several preparatory visits. This flexible approach resulted in a smooth second overnight stay for the child, and their parent expressed relief and confidence in staff's ability to care for their child. Children feel comfortable expressing preferences, disagreements or choosing alternative activities.

Children, including those who are non-speaking, are meaningfully involved in the day-to-day life of the home. Staff use sensitive, creative approaches to help children to express their wishes. Children's views are gathered through methods such as picture and widget questionnaires, staff observations and informal conversations. Leaders act on this feedback to continuously improve children's experiences at the home.

Children's diversity, backgrounds and specific needs are carefully considered when allocating bedrooms. Where possible, children choose their rooms and understand that others may use the same room at different times. The home consults with the specialist team and makes bespoke adjustments to ensure safety, comfort and accessibility.

Staff demonstrate excellent insight into how children perceive themselves versus how families may view their capabilities. The registered manager and staff balance these perspectives sensitively when setting goals for the children that are both aspirational and realistic. The leaders work exceptionally well with the local authority children with disabilities team, the transition team and adult providers to support children and their parents to understand their child's potential and to reduce anxieties about moving into adulthood. Practical assistance is also provided, including joint visits to adult service providers and guidance on financial entitlements.

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

Safeguarding practice in the home is exemplary. Children consistently report that they feel safe, secure and well protected. Staff know each child exceptionally well and are able to keep the children safe. The registered manager's strong and reflective leadership helps staff to explore in depth what 'feeling safe' means for each child. This ensures that safety planning is personalised, meaningful and fully embedded in daily routines.

All staff are trained in children's specific medical and behavioural needs (for example, gastrostomy feeding) and they know how to access additional specialist input when needed.

Incidents are extremely rare. When incidents happen, the registered manager and staff handle them swiftly, transparently and in accordance with safeguarding procedures. Children are confident in identifying trusted adults whom they can talk to. Staff listen carefully, take children's concerns seriously and respond with sensitivity and urgency. For example, staff acting promptly on a child's worries demonstrated a deeply embedded culture where children's voices drive safeguarding actions and learning from incidents.

There have been no missing-from-home incidents and no physical interventions, reflecting the home's highly effective preventative approach. Staff are well trained in the home's preferred de-escalation techniques and use alternative strategies that successfully reduce children's worries and behaviours and prevent crises.

Risk management is excellent. All activities are thoughtfully and individually risk assessed, ensuring that children can access enriching experiences safely. When welcoming new children, staff conduct thorough enquiries and observations to gain a detailed understanding of risks, strengths and vulnerabilities. This informs robust support planning and contributes to a sensitive and well-considered pairing process, when more than one child visits the home.

The family support worker, headteacher and parents all report high levels of trust and confidence in the home's safeguarding arrangements. They speak positively about the quality of communication and the home's commitment to keeping them well informed about children's routines, progress and needs.

The environment is safe, well maintained and proportionate to children's needs. Staff skilfully balance the secure storage of hazardous materials with opportunities for children

to develop independence. Video monitoring is used only when necessary, such as monitoring epilepsy-related seizures, and always with parental consent. Children are supported to understand the purpose of monitoring, reinforcing a culture of openness and emotional safety.

Since the last inspection, there was one medication error. This did not impact the child's health or wellbeing. The registered manager and staff responded with reflective practice and a strong commitment to continuous improvement of their practice. Robust analysis of the incident led to a review of medication administration procedures and enhanced learning about the importance of involving children in discussions about their own health needs. This proactive and child-centred approach demonstrates a culture of accountability, learning, and improvement, ensuring children experience safe, high-quality care.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is led exceptionally well by a permanent, highly experienced registered manager whose practice is both effective and deeply child-centred. She is supported by an equally skilled responsible individual who has a clear understanding of the children's needs and a strong grasp of the service's strengths and areas for development. Together, they provide stability, direction and inspiration.

Leaders and managers are ambitious and constant in their commitment to improving the lives of the children in their care. The registered manager's forward-thinking leadership creates a nurturing and highly effective environment where children flourish. Their expectations are high and their determination has helped to secure excellent outcomes for children. Staff consistently describe the registered manager as a strong role model who leads with creativity and a relentless focus on children's progress and well-being.

The registered manager has created a culture of positivity, aspiration and continuous improvement. She leads by example and uses innovative, robust monitoring systems that identify practice issues and actively drive improvement. Her creative approach to problem-solving has led to well-evidenced benefits for children. These include developing enhanced transition-to-adulthood pathways that support children and parents more effectively.

Staff speak extremely highly of the training, support and overall culture within the home. They feel valued, well guided and equipped with the skills and confidence needed to provide the best support for children who visit the provision. This strong workforce culture enables staff to deliver consistently high-quality care that enriches children's day-to-day experiences that many of the children would not otherwise access.

Care planning is robust and fully informed by children's education, health and family life. Leaders and managers maintain excellent working relationships with parents and partner agencies, including education, health and social care professionals. These strong partnerships ensure that children receive consistency across all aspects of each child's support, which is highly coordinated and effective.

Professionals regularly provide positive feedback about the home's proactive communication, reliability and the tangible progress that children make following their stays at the home. Feedback from professionals and families is extremely positive. Parents consistently describe staff and the registered manager as 'fantastic' and 'amazing', highlighting their strong support and deep understanding of the children's complex needs.

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 - Social Care

Registered provider address: Council Office, Market Street, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 5LD

Responsible individual: Dora Gouveia-Schofield

Registered manager: Joanna Romanowska

Inspector

Claudia Poienar, Social Care Inspector

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