

SC032315

Registered provider: Brighton & Hove City Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A local authority runs this short-break children's home. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to five children who have learning disabilities and/or physical disabilities. On occasion, the service may extend its provision to longer stays for children and their families who need crisis support.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since November 2017.

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

We last visited this setting on 14 January 2020 and carried out a full inspection. The report is published on our website.

Inspection dates: 4 to 5 August 2021

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	good
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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: 14 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: Outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/01/2020	Full	Outstanding
19/02/2019	Full	Outstanding
23/01/2018	Full	Outstanding
23/03/2017	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children's needs are exceptionally well met at this service. This is because they receive care from a service which is well planned and highly personalised to their individual needs. Children's views are central to all aspects of their care and activities while at the home. They enjoy an active and stimulating experience, suited to their interests and hobbies, during their short break.

All children attend local schools and continue to make progress. Children's key workers are now completing face-to-face meetings with educational placements since COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted. This has enabled improved sharing of the children's goals, achievements and communication methods. All the children have detailed personal education plans. Records are kept of recent annual reviews and any changes to shared plans, such as health or behaviour, are also included. Children make excellent progress because they live in a dedicated learning environment. Their educational achievements are enhanced because their learned skills are applied to everyday living.

The long-serving, skilled and committed staff team understands the needs and wishes of the children extremely well. This helps the children to grow in confidence and develop their independence. When children secure a target or achieve something new, their key workers continue to sustain improvement by reviewing these targets. Key workers sensitively challenge the children to continue to develop, at a pace suited to their needs. A parent said, 'Key workers are always a step ahead and carefully plan goals to help [child's name] and our family.'

The children enjoy a range of recreational opportunities when they stay. For example, there is a well-equipped sensory room, an outside soft-play cabin, an activities room, garden swings, and lots of toys, books and musical equipment for children to play with. The sofa in the lounge is looking a little worn and tired due to the frequent washing of the covers. This does not affect its use, but does detract from an otherwise homely and well-presented environment.

Children's care plans are highly detailed and regularly reviewed through excellent partnership working. Families, social workers, staff and managers ensure that these plans are treated as live documents and, as such, are regularly updated. A parent said, 'I am frequently consulted about the information recorded in my child's plans.'

In exceptional circumstances, children stay for longer periods of time or more frequently following agreed multi-agency decisions. The current examples demonstrate the commitment of a staff team that is working incredibly hard to support parents during difficult circumstances.

All children, including those with complex communication difficulties, have a voice in this home. Staff promote choice for each individual child effectively. The children feel comfortable with staff and interact extremely well with them. The staff understand the specific ways each individual child communicates. This means children with severe communication difficulties have a voice and can make choices.

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

Children are supported into the home at a pace they are comfortable with. This ensures that any anxiety, when new to the home, is minimised. Children and families benefit from this approach. The staff are very sensitive to the need for careful planning of admissions, particularly when bearing in mind each child's learning difficulty, health needs and abilities to comprehend change.

The staff have an excellent knowledge and understanding of the children's vulnerabilities. Detailed risk assessments, combined with staff vigilance and awareness, ensure that the children are always kept safe. Exceptionally clear plans are in place that guide the staff to help minimise risk. Carefully assessed staffing levels ensure that the children receive appropriate support and supervision while being free to move and explore safely in their home.

The staff are exceptionally proactive in seeking the views of the children. They interact with the children using a variety of communication methods tailored to each child's needs. This ensures that children have a voice in decision-making. The staff take time to ask, and understand, how the children are feeling using a range of expressive emotion symbols. This helps the children to show the staff how they are feeling without becoming frustrated and demonstrating their emotions through behaviour which others may find challenging.

The staff manage the children's complex emotional and behavioural needs well. They demonstrate an absolute commitment to helping the children to cope with their strong emotions when they find situations difficult. The staff work closely and transparently with parents and professionals to gain insight into the children's needs. Where needed, the children have behaviour plans that mirror strategies and techniques used in the children's educational settings. This approach, drawing on learning from educational professionals' approaches and methods, ensures that the children make exceptional progress. Furthermore, this joined-up way of working helps the children to feel safe and cared for in a consistent way.

Staff are aware of how each child communicates and how they may display their displeasure in their own individual way. The registered manager is quick to respond following a complaint and concludes with parents and professionals where appropriate. This approach means that the children and their families know that complaints are taken seriously and investigated rigorously.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The staff benefit from individually tailored induction and development processes that allow them to settle into their new roles confidently. Existing team members provide an added layer of guidance and support to new colleagues. Consequently, this inclusive and welcoming environment results in excellent staff retention. The children benefit greatly from the stability and permanence that this brings.

There is an effective management team, fully supported by a committed and experienced staff team, who work together extremely well. The registered manager consistently sends out positive messages to the staff and communicates high expectations about sustaining improvement. The manager routinely makes good use of monitoring activities relating to the quality of care, which results in improved outcomes for children. The targets in the team plan for development of the service are realistic and fully involve the whole staff team.

However, recent independent visits to the home are short, and therefore the range of visits is limited. It is not clear from the visitor's reports if visits to the home are announced or unannounced, and no contact has been made with outside professionals. Often children are not present during the independent visits, and subsequently children's views, wishes and feelings are not evident in reports produced by the independent visitor. This provides a narrow scope of independent assurance and makes it difficult for the regulator to monitor the home effectively in between inspections. Similarly, this compromises the provider's ability to fully monitor and review the service and identify all potential areas to improve.

The registered manager and the staff team are inspirational, ambitious and influential in changing the children's lives. One child recently visited the home during lockdown restrictions without any communication aids and was presenting behaviours that challenged the staff team. The child's key worker worked determinedly to create an augmented communication system for the child, adding plentiful symbols and resources to help the child to communicate effectively. Subsequently, the child was able to make clear choices in her daily routines, likes and preferences, and as a result, there was a marked reduction in incidents. Education professionals, and the child's allocated social worker and parent, have expressed that they are amazed at the child's progress since visiting the home.

The registered manager promotes a high culture of positivity and transparency. There is a clear emphasis on the importance of development and learning from events. For example, following a medication error, the registered manager reviewed staff competencies and assessments to reduce further occurrences of it happening again. As a result, there have been no further medication errors.

The home's workforce development plan focuses on individual staff's strengths, training and development needs. However, it does not include all the most recent training for staff. This is a missed opportunity to demonstrate the importance the registered manager places on the staff team's continued learning and professional development.

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 that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person— if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires; and to inspect the premises of the home and such of the home's records (except for a child's case records, unless the child and the child's placing authority consent) as the independent person requires. A visit by the independent person to the home may be unannounced. The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether— children are effectively safeguarded; and the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. The independent person's report may recommend actions that the registered person may take in relation to the home and timescales within which the registered person must consider whether or not to take those actions. (Regulation 44 (1)(2)(a)(b)(3)(4)(a)(b)(5))	6 November 2021

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the children's home is a nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children. In particular, ensure that all areas are domestic in appearance and any worn areas of the home are improved. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should have a workforce plan which can fulfil the workforce related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20) The plan should be updated to include any new training and qualifications completed by staff while working at the home and used to record the ongoing training and continuing professional development needs of staff – including the home's manager. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)

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: SC032315

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider address: Hove Town Hall, Norton Road, Brighton BN3 3BQ

Responsible individual: Carl Campbell

Registered manager: Clare Brunt

Inspectors:

Kelly Monniot, Social Care Inspector

Mark Newington, Social Care Inspector

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