

SC033120

Registered provider: Luton Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority home provides short breaks and respite care for children with additional needs and complex health needs.

The manager registered with Ofsted in July 2012.

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 July 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: 6 April 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/04/2022	Full	Good
13/04/2021	Full	Good
02/10/2019	Full	Good
06/02/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

At the time of this inspection, two children were having tea visits. Up to 24 children access short breaks on a rotational basis.

Staff have positive relationships with children. They know the children well and understand and meet their individual needs. Staff understand how to communicate with children with complex needs and, whenever possible, ensure that children can make choices. Staff are nurturing and provide good care. Children feel well cared for and valued.

The manager and staff have built positive relationships with the children's parents, providing practical and emotional support. Parents feel supported and said that communication from the staff is good. One parent said, 'We are so happy that our family is part of the [children's home] family. It means so much to us and is a lifeline for me and my family.' Parents are confident in the care that their children receive.

The manager understands that families and children need to feel reassured before children's short breaks. Before children visit for short breaks, children and their families have a tour of the home. The children start with short visits before they progress to longer day visits or overnight stays. Parents and children feel reassured and well prepared for the short breaks.

Children take part in a range of activities including day trips, visits to parks and activities at the home such as arts and crafts. Staff monitor children's enjoyment of these to help plan further activities for children to enjoy. The children benefit from these fun and enriching experiences.

Staff encourage children to develop independent living skills. The staff help children to manage personal care and develop important life skills at appropriate levels for individuals.

The spacious home has recently been redecorated. There is a large garden with specialist play equipment for children to enjoy. Children's bedrooms are equipped to meet a range of needs. However, the bedrooms are all plain and not appealing to children. There are minimal photos of children displayed around the home. There are weeds growing at the front entrance and the fence to the front of the property needs repainting. These issues detract from an otherwise well-kept home.

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

Children are safeguarded well. The manager has ensured that staff have appropriate safeguarding training and that they understand safeguarding procedures. Staff are confident and well equipped to manage safeguarding incidents.

Regularly reviewed risk assessments give staff clear information about identified risks to children and how to safely manage them.

Children do not go missing from the home. There are high staffing levels and, because of their needs, children are constantly supervised. The manager and staff recognise how vulnerable the children are. There are clear protocols for staff to follow in the event of a child going missing from the home. Staff are well prepared and have the guidance that they need to help keep children safe.

There have been three low-level physical interventions since the last inspection. These have been appropriate and necessary. Children are encouraged and helped to express how they feel. The manager ensures that staff are debriefed following an incident. However, on one occasion, the manager did not record her review of a physical intervention.

The manager dealt with two allegations promptly and took appropriate action. The allegations were concluded efficiently and did not leave the child vulnerable. However, it was unclear from the records when the local authority designated officer was initially informed. The manager only notified Ofsted when Ofsted requested the notification. There was a significant delay in notification which reduced Ofsted's ability to monitor the home effectively.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is experienced and suitably qualified. She has managed the home for over 11 years. The manager has high aspirations for children and is very nurturing in her approach. She models this positive practice and staff have the same nurturing approach. Staff benefit from the manager's experience and they meet the needs of the children well.

Most staff hold a relevant level 3 diploma or are working towards the qualification within agreed time frames. Some of the children have complex health needs. Nurses have provided bespoke training to enable staff to meet children's health needs. There is excellent joined-up working with social workers, staff and health professionals. Staff understand how to meet children's health needs.

A social worker, who is responsible for overseeing the care of most of the children, spoke highly of the manager and staff and the care given to children. The social worker said, 'The service helps to keep families together. The manager and staff are simply marvellous.' Social workers are assured that families get the help that they need.

Staff said that the manager is supportive and approachable and that supervisions are good quality. However, two staff have not received regular supervision. Not having regular supervision means that development opportunities could be reduced.

The independent person's reports are of good quality and include a good range of feedback from children, parents and social workers. The independent person makes recommendations to help the manager improve the quality of care that children receive. However, there have been some delays in sending the reports to Ofsted.

At the time of this inspection, the provider had recently appointed a new responsible individual. The provider had not informed Ofsted of this appointment. This does not ensure that Ofsted has current, important information and the correct details for the person appointed to Ofsted do not have the correct point of contact information and the home must have a responsible individual to operate lawfully.

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 give notice in writing to HMCI, as soon as it is reasonably practicable to do so, if any of the following events take place or are expected by the registered person to take place— any change in the identity of the responsible individual. (Regulation 49 (e)(iii))	27 July 2023
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; or there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(c)(e))	27 July 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the home is a nurturing environment. In particular, ensure that the front entrance to the home and fencing to the front of the home are well maintained and that children's bedrooms are appealing and welcoming to children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that staff supervision is carried out regularly for all staff to support their continuous development. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. Specifically, ensure that the date of referred allegations and the manager's oversight of physical interventions are recorded. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

- The registered person should ensure that monitoring reports by the independent person are submitted to Ofsted without delay. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 55 paragraph 10.24)

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: SC033120

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Luton Borough Council

Registered provider address: Luton Borough Council, Town Hall, George Street,
Luton LU1 2BQ

Responsible individual: Post vacant

Registered manager: Christine Ali

Inspector

Amy Miles, Social Care Inspector

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