

SC033919

Registered provider: London Borough of Harrow

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home provides short breaks for up to five children. The statement of purpose reflects that the home cares for children with learning, sensory and/or physical disabilities.

The registered manager has been in post since July 2007.

Inspection dates: 23 to 24 July 2019

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: 1 November 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/11/2018	Full	Outstanding
26/09/2017	Full	Outstanding
30/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
09/11/2016	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

During their short breaks in this home, children make outstanding progress from their starting points. Children's highly individualised needs are broken down into small steps to help them achieve significant milestones. Staff and children celebrate their many successes, which include improved sleep routines and the development of independent living skills.

'Star of the week' certificates celebrate children's individual achievements in all areas of their lives. For example, children achieve awards for their participation in group play, excellent listening skills and for one child, their first trip to the hairdresser's.

Children safely participate in an enormous range of exciting activities inside the home and the local community. Staff plan thoroughly for engaging the children in community activities. This includes consideration of wheelchair access, parking availability or potential crowds and loud noise that the children may find unsettling. This ensures that plans are detailed and child-centred, enabling children to enjoy their outings without any additional challenges.

All staff work tirelessly on their individual project action plans that are designed to provide new and unique experiences for the children when they stay in the home. This also includes a review of existing venues and feedback from the children. Detailed comments, such as 'a bit too hilly for wheelchairs', ensure that activities are suitable and inclusive.

The care afforded to children is always responsive to changing needs. During the inspection, the inspector saw that staff took extra care to minimise the children's exposure to the extremely hot weather conditions. A visit to the park was appropriately changed to a visit to the local air-conditioned cinema. A shaded paddling pool and ice lollies were ready for the children to enjoy on their return to the home.

Staff place children at the heart of the home. The staff's meticulous attention to detail ensures that the care provided matches each child's unique routines and preferences. For example, teddy bears are always placed in the seat next to a specific child in the minibs and there are favourite stories to read to children at bedtime. Staff prepare tailor-made school lunch boxes that meet each child's needs.

Staff listen to and act on children's wishes and feelings. Staff know each child's communication style and successfully encourage them to participate in all aspects of their care. Children are supported to choose the home's annual charity of the year, decide the food for their leaving party, and make online purchases for new toys for the home.

The home's children's charter states, 'Be happy to see me arrive and spend time with me just for fun'. A member of staff said, 'The onus is on us for the children in the home to have a positive experience.' These statements epitomise the home's welcoming atmosphere and the staff's exceptional dedication to the children who stay in this home.

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

Children are kept safe. Children's individual risk assessments aligned to excellent risk management strategies ensure that staff are aware of the specific risks to each child. Staff are fully aware of the actions that they must take to minimise risks to protect children. High levels of staff supervision ensure that children do not go missing during their short breaks.

Positive behaviour support plans enable staff to respond to children with more complex needs. Staff proactively identify children's stress triggers that may lead to challenging behaviour and swiftly use redirection or de-escalation techniques to successfully help keep children calm. There has been just one episode of physical restraint since the last inspection.

Children who stay in this home have a range of needs, such as sensory impairment, developmental delay, complex learning difficulties and/or limited or pre-verbal levels of communication. Staff's imaginative use of sensory storytelling and intensive interaction communication helps enrich children's experiences in the home, alongside developing their social and communication skills.

Staff use innovative strategies to ensure children's inclusivity. For example, staff prepared a video of the first floor of the home for a wheelchair user who is not able to access the upper floor. The creativity of staff ensured that the child's wish to 'see' the upstairs was fulfilled.

The dynamic thinking of the staff group also enabled another child to continue to stay settled in the cinema by planning the seating so that the child could choose to stand, stretch and clap as he wished to do. As a result, the child was able to watch the whole film, enjoy a positive visit in the local community and further develop his or her coping skills.

Staff are always alert to the changing needs of children, such as when they reach puberty. With the agreement of parents and professionals, staff purchased a bespoke learning resource and undertook an exceptionally sensitive piece of work to support one child in relation to understanding their sexual health.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is constantly evolving social work practice. The registered manager welcomes new ideas and strategies within the home. She is currently developing an enhanced staffing structure so that she can continue to provide an outstanding service to children and their families, alongside her own increasing involvement in the local authority's future special educational needs and disability strategy.

Staff are experienced, competent and highly motivated. Morale is high, and the staff's enthusiasm and positivity are infectious. Staff spoken with said that they love the work they do and see it as their vocation. They praised the registered manager's passion, her dedication to the home and the children and their families with whom they work.

The registered manager has high expectations of her staff team. Recruitment open days help identify candidates suitable for interview. Applicants must take part in a set task in the home with the children. Applicants' aptitude and attitude are reviewed, alongside feedback from children, which helps inform applicant selections. This means that the registered manager only appoints staff who have the skills necessary to care for children in the home.

Multi-professional partnership working is a strength of the home. Staff attend every child's annual education review, children in need meetings and regularly visit the children's family homes and schools. This collaborative working ensures consistency in the children's care and support.

Team development days and staff training programmes are highly effective. Staff from the children and adolescent mental health and advocacy support services visit the home and advise staff on the services that are available and strategies that are suitable for children with learning disabilities.

Bespoke training, such as safeguarding children with disabilities, intensive interaction communication and autism in adolescence, broadens staff's already comprehensive knowledge.

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: SC033919

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: London Borough of Harrow

Registered provider address: Civic Centre, Station Road, Harrow HA1 2XF

Responsible individual: Paul Hewitt

Registered manager: Eithne Staunton

Inspector

Victoria Jones, social care inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

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