

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 manager was registered with Ofsted in 2003.

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

Inspection dates: 23 to 24 June 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	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: 23 July 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/07/2019	Full	Outstanding
01/11/2018	Full	Outstanding
26/09/2017	Full	Outstanding
30/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children receive individualised care that meets their needs exceptionally well. This means that children make remarkable progress in achieving set targets. This short-break service provides children with fun, creative and innovative opportunities that they might otherwise not experience.

Children and staff share positive relationships. A staff member said, 'The best thing about my job - I know this is a cliché - but 100%, without a doubt, it's working with the kids.' Children are at ease with the staff team, enjoy their company and eagerly look to engage them in their activities, learning and play.

Children's wishes and feelings are expertly understood by staff. Children benefit from staff's conscientious efforts to communicate effectively with them. Staff are skilled in interpreting children's gestures and body language. They are acutely aware and take action when children appear sad or perturbed.

Children's communication needs are very well met. Care plans routinely include information about the way children prefer to communicate. Staff are committed to ensuring that their needs and wishes are understood. Staff routinely use pictorial and symbol cues and sign language with children. This is to help to obtain their views and support them to make day-to-day choices.

Children are supported to live healthily. This has been the case prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff are proactive in ensuring effective action is taken to prevent the spread of coronavirus and that children follow preventative measures. Staff are skilled and experienced in managing complex medical conditions, such as PEG feeds and epilepsy.

Children's development and learning outcomes are excellent because of their short-break stay. Staff communication with education professionals is consistent and they regularly share strategies that promote children's learning and development. A school deputy headteacher said, 'Our learners' lives would be poorer without the provision and the care and understanding that goes with it.'

During the pandemic, when children were unable to attend school, staff ensured children's learning continued. For example, for one child this meant using remote systems and his communication board to join his class and teacher to share his classwork. This opportunity would not have been possible had the child not been on his short-break stay.

Children enjoy celebrating their achievements and staff encourage this ethos. Children enjoy seeing themselves in photographs participating in activities that often were previously unattainable, for example, sightseeing in London.

Older children who move on from the home benefit from careful transition planning to adult provision. Staff are instrumental in preparing children for their move and they ensure that plans progress at the child's pace. Children are very much involved in co-ordinating these plans and are supported to make decisions.

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

Children feel safe and are very well protected from neglect, harm and abuse. They benefit from the organisation's clear and comprehensive child protection policies and procedures. The staff team is very familiar with these protocols. Staff receive regular training and guidance about safeguarding disabled children. This helps to keep children safe.

Staff are knowledgeable and vigilant about children's individual vulnerabilities. Staff supervision of children is highly effective. This results in very few critical incidents. Children do not go missing from the home, make complaints or allegations against staff or experience exploitation. The use of restraint is extremely rare, as is the use of sanctions.

Children's safety and well-being is at the centre of practice at the home. Staff team meetings, staff supervision and shift handover meetings continue to have a strong focus on child protection. For example, staff worked extensively using social stories with a child to explain new plans in place, to reassure him that an isolated incident of bullying would not happen again.

Staff are proactive in supporting children when serious child protection concerns emerge. In a recent case, the concerns for the safety of a child at home resulted in staff restructuring the way the home is usually run to provide an extended, continuous stay for the child. Staff worked closely with the child, to help him understand what was happening during the family crisis. Staff were successful in providing a safe, nurturing environment that offered the child reassurance during this time of increasing anxiety around being separated from his family.

Staff are clear and consistent in setting boundaries. Behaviour management support plans are highly individualised. These plans provide staff with effective strategies that help promote appropriate behaviour and assist them to manage children's complex behaviour.

Comprehensive individualised risk assessments address known and anticipated risks. These provide staff with guidance and highly effective strategies that help to reduce risk-taking behaviour. This results in fewer critical incidents and promotes a calm, fun, nurturing environment.

The premises are appropriate for the care of disabled children. The home is well furnished, and children use adapted equipment which promotes their safe care. Managers continue to make improvements to the fabric of the building, however,

some areas require further attention. This will make the premises more homely in appearance.

Staff work effectively with other professionals. Their contribution to the protection of children is significant and is highly valued. A local authority social worker said, 'Staff attend all safeguarding meetings and child in need reviews and are very involved in the social work process. All of the staff that I have worked with have been excellent.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The leadership and management of this short-breaks service is exceptional. The previous full inspection judged the service as outstanding overall and resulted in no requirements or recommendations. The registered manager is inspirational and since the last inspection has continued to improve the quality of care children receive.

The registered manager is a highly qualified, experienced practitioner and manager, with an extensive background in working effectively with disabled children. She is an influential leader, with clear and realistic ambitions for the home and for the children who stay.

Managers pay good attention to children's cultural needs, for example, their religious dietary requirements, and they celebrate Eid, Easter and St George's Day and listen to music and watch television programmes that reflect their cultural heritage.

Leaders and managers meet with children, parents and others to understand their views about the effectiveness of the service. Feedback from stakeholders demonstrates high praise and value for the home and the quality of care that children receive.

The home is meeting the aims and objectives as outlined in its statement of purpose well. A local authority social worker said, 'I feel that the staff team knows the children very well and works with school, the social work team and the family to support getting to know the children and catering to their individual needs.'

Staff training opportunities are excellent and there is a renewed focus on specialist disability training. Newly employed staff undergo an induction and, thereafter, receive training to meet their developmental needs. Leaders encourage long-serving senior staff to undergo management training. This is to enhance their care practices and management skills.

The registered manager displays a comprehensive appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. She completes regular reviews of the home's quality of care. Her monitoring is robust, with detailed action plans drawn up to further embed the exceptional care offered to children.

A parent says of the service, 'The home has been fantastic throughout the pandemic and been our only other support when school clubs, etc, were closed. I don't know

how we would have managed without them. They have been fantastic! I cannot praise them enough.'

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child; and enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(i)(ii))	1 October 2021

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: SC033919

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: London Borough of Harrow

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

Responsible individual: Paul Hewitt

Registered manager: Eithne Staunton

Inspector

Sandra Jacobs-Walls, Social Care Inspector

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