

# SC035625

Registered provider: Rowden House School Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This home is part of a residential special school and offers care for up to 30 children with learning disabilities. Care is provided across eight houses in the grounds of the school. At the time of this inspection, 19 children were living at the home.

The home has a school on the same site. This is open to children living at the home and day students. The school was inspected by Ofsted at the same time as the children's home. There are two separate inspection report and two separate outcome judgements.

The manager registered with Ofsted in August 2020 and holds the appropriate qualifications.

All children were seen during this inspection, and their interactions were observed. Some children shared their views about what it is like to live at the home.

### Inspection dates: 1 to 3 July 2025

|                                                                                           |                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account | <b>outstanding</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|

|                                                             |      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| How well children and young people are helped and protected | good |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------|

|                                           |             |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------|
| The effectiveness of leaders and managers | outstanding |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------|

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:** 10 June 2024

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement            |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| 10/06/2024      | Full            | Good                            |
| 11/09/2023      | Full            | Good                            |
| 28/06/2022      | Full            | Requires improvement to be good |
| 29/06/2021      | Full            | Good                            |

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

Children receive highly individualised care that is tailored to their specific needs. Leaders and managers ensure that staff are well equipped to deliver this care through comprehensive training and effective partnership working with both multi-disciplinary teams and external agencies.

Children make significant and sustained progress in all areas of their development. Each child has a detailed plan with aspirational targets, which are regularly reviewed by the multi-disciplinary team, external professionals and parents. As a result, children achieve exceptional outcomes. For example, children who previously did not attend education are now attending full time, and one child who used to pull out their hair when distressed has stopped this behaviour and now has a full head of hair. Staff meticulously document children's progress, experiences, challenges and achievements in detailed monthly summaries, which are shared with parents and social workers. This promotes transparency and demonstrates strong communication and partnership working.

Transitions into, within and out of the home are carefully planned and managed. Managers work closely with parents, social workers and other key individuals in the child's life before any move is agreed. Prior to transitions, managers assess the ability of staff to meet the child's needs alongside those of other children in the home, school or adult placement. Children and their parents are supported to visit the home multiple times before moving in. Additional preparation, such as involving parents in decorating and setting up bedrooms, helps children to settle and feel at home.

When children move on from the home at the age of 18 years, staff from adult services spend time working alongside the home's team. This enables them to build relationships with the child and gain insight into their needs and routines. As a result, transitions to adult placements are smooth and children settle quickly into their new environments.

All children attend the organisation's on-site school, which was judged outstanding by Ofsted during the concurrent inspection. Staff from the home work closely with education colleagues and the clinical team, which includes an occupational therapist, physiotherapist, speech and language therapist, health liaison officer and psychologist. Professional practice is shared across teams, with care staff supporting in classrooms, during work experience and in community-based activities. This ensures a consistent, high standard of care and education, informed by research and tailored to each child's diagnosis and assessed needs. For example, a child with pica disorder has been successfully supported to stop ingesting non-food items through the use of crunchy snacks as a redirection strategy.

Children's health needs are met through close collaboration with the health liaison officer and external professionals. Staff carry out individualised desensitisation programmes, enabling children to access medical treatment that they previously could not tolerate. As

a result, children now wear prescription glasses, attend medical appointments and undergo procedures such as vaccinations, blood pressure checks and blood tests. Staff also support children with complex and rare health conditions to attend specialist conferences, where they meet healthcare experts and others with similar diagnoses.

Staff promote healthy lifestyles through a focus on physical activity and nutrition. Children take part in a wide range of activities, including rebound therapy, physiotherapy, step and Zumba classes, walks and tricycle riding. They are encouraged to make healthy food choices, grow their own produce, try new foods, dine out and cook meals. These efforts have led to children achieving healthy weights, expanding their diets and improving their physical strength and coordination. Some children have even progressed to moving independently without mobility aids.

Children who were previously socially isolated now engage in a wide range of enriching activities. They regularly participate in community events, such as a local soapbox derby and a scarecrow competition, which they won. All children are supported to go on holiday, either independently or with peers. One parent described how their child, who previously only left the house in a wheelchair, now enjoys a full and active life without needing mobility aids since moving into the home.

Children thrive as they gain independence and freedom. Staff use a variety of communication tools and strategies to help children develop essential life skills. All children participate in work experience, and one child now walks to and from school independently. Others have achieved continence, established healthy sleep routines and no longer damage their environment. Children actively engage in social opportunities, including youth groups, birthday parties, gardening competitions and national events. These experiences build confidence, enhance social skills and support preparation for adulthood and future transitions.

The site is thoughtfully designed to provide children with space to explore and enjoy. It includes a wide range of play equipment that promotes movement and supports emotional regulation, such as trampolines, climbing frames, scooters, bikes and trikes. The gardens feature vegetable patches, sandpits, ball pools and paddling pools. The site also supports family relationships, offering accommodation for visiting families, a dedicated family room and sensory spaces. All eight homes are well maintained, and children's bedrooms are highly personalised, reflecting their individual identities and preferences.

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

Children living at the home are particularly vulnerable due to their disabilities and levels of understanding. They rely on staff to keep them safe and to support their well-being.

Managers and staff demonstrate a clear understanding of child protection and whistle-blowing procedures. When concerns arise, either in relation to a child's safety or staff practice, the registered manager and designated safeguarding leads work closely with relevant external professionals and share information appropriately. Safeguarding

concerns are used as learning opportunities, with managers reviewing practice and implementing new strategies to strengthen safeguarding arrangements. These actions ensure that children's safety remains a priority.

Staff help children to feel safe by enabling them to communicate their needs effectively. This supports children to explore and regulate their emotions and behaviours. A wide range of communication tools are used, including words, symbols, colours, pictures and social stories. Children are given regular opportunities to express their wishes and feelings to staff and managers. All children also have access to independent advocates, which further supports them to raise any concerns.

Staff build positive and meaningful relationships with children, which are central to promoting their safety and emotional well-being. They support children to manage their emotions and behaviours through consistent strategies, effective communication and sensitive reassurance.

Incidents involving physical intervention are closely monitored by managers. Strategies used are solution focused, and evidence based. When patterns or qualitative evidence indicate a need for change, managers respond promptly. They prioritise the well-being of both children and staff, using data to inform decisions and assess the impact of interventions over time. There is strong continuity of practice between education and care staff, which contributes to the successful implementation of strategies and the positive outcomes achieved by children. For example, one child's self-injurious behaviour has reduced significantly, enabling a reduction in their medication.

Children do not go missing from the home. However, clear plans are in place that outline the actions that staff should take if this were to occur.

Staff have a strong understanding of the specific risks associated with each child's needs. Safeguarding measures are in place to mitigate these risks, such as the use of harnesses during transport or locking cupboards to prevent access to hazardous items. These restrictive measures are applied with caution and in recognition of the potential impact on others in a group living environment. However, the processes for regularly reviewing these measures and exploring alternative approaches are not consistently well documented, and the outcomes of such reviews are not always clearly recorded.

The home's recruitment and vetting procedures are robust and help to ensure that only suitable individuals are employed to work with children.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

The registered manager is a passionate and committed practitioner who leads with a clear vision to deliver outstanding care that improves children's lives. As a key member of the senior leadership team, she has built a professional and experienced team of home managers, who are energised by her leadership. Together, they have created a reflective and nurturing environment that is firmly focused on the needs of children.

She actively seeks out research and best practice to enhance staff development and improve children's experiences. Her own professional development is ongoing; she engages in coaching with a director and is undertaking a level 7 qualification in strategic management. These initiatives are strengthening her leadership skills and enabling her to influence wider service development. For example, she has recently introduced trauma and attachment training across the school site, complementing the existing therapeutic training programme.

The registered manager makes effective use of internal and external quality assurance processes. These provide the staff team and senior leaders with a comprehensive understanding of the service's strengths and areas for development. Development plans are ambitious and informed by consultation with staff, placing authorities and children. These plans are driving continuous improvement and delivering positive outcomes for children, families and staff.

Staff benefit from a strong culture of professional development. They engage in reflective supervision, 360-degree appraisals and purposeful team meetings. Staff report feeling listened to and valued, and they appreciate the opportunities for progression and succession planning. Each staff member has a detailed and individualised development plan that supports their ongoing professional growth.

A high proportion of staff are qualified, with 60 having completed the required professional qualification. The remaining eight are currently undertaking the qualification and are on track to complete it within the required timescales. Staff receive a high-quality induction and ongoing training that are underpinned by therapeutic models and tailored to the specific needs of the children. The training programme is regularly reviewed and enhanced.

The cultural diversity of the staff team enriches the service and supports the creative promotion of children's individual needs. Staff work closely with families to understand each child's background and history. For example, staff have cooked alongside parents to learn family recipes, supported children to attend places of worship and facilitated meaningful family time. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the registered manager, the staff team and the progress their children are making.

Children receive high-quality, individualised care that is bespoke to their needs. The registered manager and staff have an in-depth understanding of each child, supported by excellent partnership working with the clinical and academic teams. Professionals speak highly of the registered manager and the staff team. As a result, children are thriving both at home and in school.

## **What does the children's home need to do to improve?**

### **Recommendation**

- Approaches to restraint should recognise that children are continuing to develop, both physically and emotionally. Any use of restrictive practice should be suitable for the needs of the individual child. This specifically relates to children not having access to clothing and toiletries restricted because cupboards, drawers or wardrobes are locked. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 48, paragraph 9.54)

### **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:** SC035625

**Provision sub-type:** Residential special school

**Registered provider address:** 1 St. George's, Vernon Gate, Derby, Derbyshire DE1 1UQ

**Responsible individual:** Mark Ryder

**Registered manager:** Iwona Makal

## Inspectors

Dawn Bennett, Social Care Inspector  
John Tomlinson, Social Care Inspector

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