

SC038435

Registered provider: Sunfield Children's Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is part of a residential special school. Since May 2017, it has been a subsidiary of the Ruskin Mill Trust.

The home is registered to care for up to 38 children with severe and complex learning difficulties and behavioural needs, including seven placements for children who require short breaks. There are seven houses within the grounds of the school. At the time of the inspection, 22 children were living in six houses.

The home has a school on the same site, which is open to children living at the home and day students. The inspectors only inspected the social care provision on this site.

The registered manager is suitably qualified and was registered with Ofsted in April 2018.

Inspection dates: 8 to 10 October 2024

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: 25 July 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/07/2023	Full	Good
05/07/2022	Full	Good
12/05/2021	Full	Good
09/10/2019	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

At this visit, 15 children and seven young adults were living at the home. All were seen and observed. For clarity, all will be referred to as children in this report so as not to identify any specific person.

Children living at this home make progress in many areas of their lives. For example, staff help children to become continent, improve their self-care skills and to try and enjoy new foods.

Staff have developed their skills to care for the children through the organisation's home-making training. This has enhanced staff's skills in cooking and crafting. Staff have used those skills to improve the care children receive. Children have home-cooked foods made with produce that is grown on site. Staff help children to create crafted items, which are used and displayed in the home.

Staff help children to take part in a variety of activities. The extensive grounds and facilities give children opportunities to explore, learn about growing foods, take part in animal care and make things through craft activities and in the forge. In addition, children spend time out in the community. Some children have joined youth and bike clubs. Staff take children swimming, to places of interest, theatre and the cinema. During the summer, some children went on holiday.

Children attend the on-site school and their attendance is excellent. There is a positive working relationship between the home and school. As part of a multi-disciplinary team, staff create plans which help them to care for children. This ensures a consistent approach in the home and in education.

Staff know the children well and help them to use their communication aids to express their views about things they want. Staff give children options so that they can choose activities they would like to take part in and foods they would like to eat. Staff help children to use their communication aids to tell staff when they are unwell or unhappy.

Staff understand children's individual needs and actively promote choice and diversity. For one child who has a fluid identity, they have things which are traditionally seen as female and male. Staff encourage children to understand their culture and follow their families' religious preferences around foods, exposure to their religious teachings and attending religious settings.

There are several houses on the site in which children live. Staff have shown creativity in some houses, which has enhanced the homely feel. Children personalise their bedrooms to their individual taste. However, some bathrooms were looking a little tired and need updating.

There are strong links with families. Families value the support and care given to their children. Staff encourage families to visit their children in the home and staff will take children to see their families. Families say that nothing is too much trouble for staff.

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

Staff know the children well and use that knowledge to help children when they are anxious or upset. Staff are good at pre-empting behaviours and defuse situations well.

There is good multi-agency working. The multi-agency team considers children's risks and behaviours. The team then reviews and, where needed, updates the plans which tell staff about these risks and actions they need to take to keep children safe. This has resulted in a significant reduction in the need for restrictive physical intervention.

Children can and do make complaints. Staff have developed child-friendly systems that help children to understand how to make a complaint. For example, there is audio information, pictures of people they can go to, and textures children identify as positive or negative, which they can use to show they are unhappy. The manager takes complaints seriously. She investigates and takes action to rectify children's concerns. In addition, staff have supported a child to make a complaint about their placing authority.

The manager responds promptly to concerns about staff practice. Concerns are reported to those who need to know, investigated and, where necessary, action taken.

On one occasion, a child left the home and staff followed but lost sight of them. Staff sought advice from the manager and followed the child's missing from care protocol. The child was found quickly and returned to the home safe and well. However, not all children's plans have the information that staff would need if a child were to go missing from the home or whilst out with staff in the community.

The home has undertaken a review of fire safety and some shortfalls were found. However, records did not clearly show that all the shortfalls had been rectified or when. This was resolved during the inspection, but only after the inspector highlighted it.

In the event of an emergency, the home has an emergency grab bag. However, one grab bag did not have all the information staff would need.

Some children are subject to restrictions due to their, or others', vulnerability. Agreements are made with the placing authority and families. However, for one child, the information is not clear around the night-time restrictions and how staff will make sure the child is kept safe. In addition, the child's parent was not clear about what restrictions were in place.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is suitably experienced and a deputy manager and a team of house managers support her. Additional support is provided by leaders within the organisation. All have high expectations and a shared vision for the home.

The registered manager uses her monitoring systems well. She monitors staff practice and has a good oversight of what is happening in the individual houses. Staff say she is present, and children know who she is.

Staff are positive about working at the home. They say leaders are supportive and that they and agency staff receive regular supervision. Changes to work patterns and the support staff receive have resulted in improved staff retention. The registered manager has made sure that only regular agency staff are used so that children receive care from those who know them well.

The registered manager has put in place a clear training plan. This tells all those working at the home what training they need to do and by when. There is a wide range of training, including training which is child specific. In addition, there are further training opportunities for staff through the trust where staff can further develop their skills and knowledge.

New staff have comprehensive inductions which help them to understand the role and children's needs. However, some new staff were unsure about who to go to if they had a concern either within or outside the organisation.

A strength of the leadership team is the multi-agency working and parental involvement. Professionals and families were complimentary about the home and the care children receive. One said that one of the house managers and their team were exceptionally talented people, putting in efforts around the clock to help their child to be as independent as possible. Others said they would not want to change anything, and that the houses are homely and that staff and leaders genuinely care.

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, The 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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(vii)) In particular, that: staff understand the arrangements for raising concerns and to whom within and outside the organisation; that plans are clear as to the action staff need to take if a child was to go missing when at the home or out in the community; that actions from fire risk assessments are completed promptly with dates of completion recorded; that risks associated with one child living in a flat at the home are clear with action that staff need to take to keep them safe, specifically at night, and that the child's parent is fully aware of the arrangements; and that emergency grab bags have everything staff need in the event of an emergency.	22 November 2024

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure the home is a nurturing and supportive environment that meets the needs of the children. It will, in most cases, be a homely, domestic environment and comply with relevant health and safety legislation. Specifically, that areas of the home that need updating and repair are completed promptly. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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: SC038435

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: Sunfield Children's Homes Limited

Registered provider address: Ruskin Mill, Millbottom, Nailsworth, Stroud,
Gloucestershire GL6 0LA

Responsible individual: Paul Sutcliffe

Registered manager: Sarah Marshall

Inspectors

Debbie Bond, Social Care inspector
Louise Battersby, Social Care inspector
Louise Naylor, Social Care inspector
Hayley Booth, Social Care inspector

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