

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, 20 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 registered with Ofsted in April 2018.

Inspection dates: 9 to 11 September 2025

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: 8 October 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/10/2024	Full	Good
25/07/2023	Full	Good
05/07/2022	Full	Good
12/05/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

At the time of the inspection, there were 20 children and three young adults living in the home. All will be referred to as children in the report to avoid potential identification of any specific individuals.

Children benefit from long-term support, which provides them with stability. They are cared for by staff who know them well and understand their individual needs. Since the last inspection, four children have moved into the home and five have moved out. Transitions are well planned and sensitively managed, ensuring children settle quickly and feel safe.

Children make very good progress in the important areas of their lives. Staff support children to achieve personalised goals at their own pace, demonstrating patience and understanding. As a result, children have improved their communication skills and grown in confidence in social situations. These achievements contribute significantly to their emotional well-being and readiness for future transitions.

Feedback from families is overwhelmingly positive. One family member said:

The home is incredible. I couldn't put into words the difference they have made to the family and [Name of Child]. The progress has been incredible.

Families feel welcomed and involved in children's care, with on-site accommodation available to support meaningful family time, even for those living far away.

Children's voices are heard and respected. Children have access to a wide range of resources to help meet their individual communication needs. The use of communication aids is embedded into daily practice, enabling children to express their views and wishes. Staff are creative and proactive in supporting children to develop verbal communication, which further empowers them.

Children have very good attendance in education. In the last year, the average school attendance for children living in the home was 99%. Also, staff ensure children are well prepared for school. Morning routines help to provide children with a calm and positive start to the day and help to support children's timely arrival at school, so they are ready to learn. The school curriculum is extended into the home environment, where food grown in the grounds is used in the home-cooked foods made, reinforcing learning and life skills for children.

Children enjoy a wide range of enriching activities that promotes their wellbeing and social development. Over the summer, children participated in holidays, day trips to theme parks, the seaside and festivals. The home's grounds are well used for fun events, including those hosted by individual houses to foster a sense of community.

The home has recently undergone significant refurbishment, improving the environment for children. However, some areas remain tired and worn, and aspects of the home environment present an institutionalised appearance.

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

Children are cared for by staff who know them well and understand their individual needs. Staff are skilled in recognising when children may be upset or distressed and respond quickly and effectively to defuse situations. They provide structure and predictability throughout the day, which is regularly communicated to children in ways they understand. This proactive approach helps to reduce anxiety and has led to a noticeable reduction in the number of significant incidents with children.

Staff have built strong and trusting relationships with the children. There have been no incidents of children going missing from the home, and children have not raised any complaints. If children are unhappy, there are systems in place for them to raise this with staff in line with their communication needs. For example, children can use a purple dragon to alert staff, who are then able to explore any concerns the child may have. In addition, children have access to an independent advocate to support their right to be heard. This helps children to feel safe and secure.

Family members report that they feel confident that their children are safe. One parent said:

[Name of Child] is very settled and likes to be there. He settles back very quickly after being at home. He likes to keep in touch with staff while he is out of the house, which shows the positive relationship with staff.

Another family member said, 'If I mention some of care staff's names, he will smile and laugh, and that tells me they are like family and care for him.'

When physical interventions are used with children, they are proportionate and necessary to keep children and others safe. Staff are trained in the use of restraint and receive regular refresher training. There is strong oversight of incidents, with weekly multi-disciplinary reviews to identify patterns and trends. However, when physical restraint is used, children and staff are not always spoken to, which does not fully support ongoing reflection and learning.

Where staff practice falls short of expected standards, leaders respond quickly. Investigations are thorough, and appropriate action is taken to minimise risk and ensure children's safety. This approach provides reassurance to children and helps to promote their well-being.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is led by an experienced and committed team of suitably qualified managers. Each of the six houses has their own manager and deputy manager, while the registered manager, supported by a senior leadership team, provides effective oversight. This leadership structure ensures that staff and leaders have the guidance and support that enables them to provide high-quality care to children.

Leaders and managers at all levels have high aspirations for both children and staff. They know the children well and are flexible and creative in their approach to care. Children's progress is regularly reviewed, and managers are proactive in trying out new strategies to ensure children continue to develop. This dynamic and responsive leadership contributes to life-changing outcomes for children, equipping them with the confidence and skills needed for future success.

Children are well supported by a stable and dedicated team of staff. Staff are given excellent support and opportunities to learn and develop. All staff receive a comprehensive induction programme that prepares them for working in the home. There is a range of ongoing training that is well attended. Most staff also possess the relevant qualification in residential childcare or are working towards achieving it. This equips staff with the knowledge and understanding required to meet children's complex needs.

Feedback from professionals is unanimously positive. One professional stated:

For me, they are an outstanding placement, and [Name of Child] needs are well met. They have gone from non-verbal to being a verbal child.

Another said:

[Name of Child] has been there a number of years. The progress he has made in the last couple of years has been amazing. They go above and beyond.

The home's therapeutic model is central to its ethos and is embedded in daily practice. This research-based approach complements the school's model and provides children with structure, consistency, warmth and trust. In addition, children benefit from support from the wide range of in-house professionals who provide them with comprehensive wraparound care. The continuity between education and care supports children's emotional development and helps them to thrive.

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 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. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(i)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that potential risks in relation to the environment are addressed without delay. This specifically relates to the heavy-lidded storage boxes, uneven garden slabs, low washing line and old furniture. Also, several bathroom areas are looking tired and need repair and refurbishment, and in two of the houses, the garden fencing gives the home an institutionalised appearance.	31 October 2025

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that any child who has been involved in an incident in which physical restraint has been used should be given the opportunity to express their feelings about their experience of the restraint as soon as is practicably possible. In addition, staff involved in the use of physical restraint should consistently be given the opportunity to discuss and reflect on its use to support learning and improvement. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 50, paragraph 9.60)

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

Louise Naylor, Social Care Inspector
Kirsty Truesdale, Social Care Inspector
Menaka De Silva, Social Care Inspector

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