

Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	04/01/2017
Unique reference number	SC391503
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Central Bedfordshire Council
Registered person address	Priory House, Monks Walk Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5TG

Responsible individual	Kenneth Harvey
Registered manager	Joyce Hunnibell
Inspector	Sonia Hay

Inspection date	04/01/2017
Previous inspection judgement	Outstanding
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged outstanding at the full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has improved in effectiveness. There were no requirements or recommendations made at the last inspection. A long-standing member of staff recently died suddenly. The managers are supporting the staff, children and their families through the grieving process in an open and sensitive way. As a result, the staff, children and their families are coping well with their loss. There are currently 30 children using the respite service. This includes a child who is having a number of tea visits before commencing overnight stays. This gradual introduction to stays enables children to become familiar with the staff and the home. It also enables the managers to fully assess the most appropriate mix of children, when allocating stays. Two children have ceased using the service and have transferred to adult services since the last inspection. The manager extended one child's stays for an additional month to allow a smoother transition to his new placement. This flexibility minimised the level of anxiety surrounding the move for both the child and his family. The staff are extremely knowledgeable about the children's likes and dislikes and they work tirelessly with the families to expand the breadth of the children's experiences. A recent example of this occurred when a parent kept stating that their child does not like parties. The manager, in agreement with the child's parents, ensured that the child's stay coincided with a seasonal party and built in strategies that the staff could use to assist the child. This was a real success, and there are numerous pictures of him enjoying and participating in the party. Children and their families benefit immensely from the staff's ability to gradually introduce the children to new experiences. The staff offer the children a wide and varied programme of activities. These range from sensory activities, such as collecting leaves in a local park, to activities such as cinema trips. There is a vast amount of pictorial evidence of the children out on various activities in the community. The staff are incorporating these into the children's records, to give them a more personalised feel. A parent said, 'She enjoys going out with them. She goes to the cinema, parks, she enjoys everything they do. We try and get out when at home. However, with two other children, it is	

not always possible.'

All the children are attending school. The staff are in constant liaison with the schools and they attend multi-agency meetings and provide reports and updates. The liaison with the schools assists the staff to provide the children with a consistent approach.

The staff and families work together and share their understanding of positive strategies, to ensure that the children receive a consistent response from all of the adults who care for them. The very low level of incidents in the home demonstrates that the staff are effective in their use of the agreed behaviour management strategies.

There have been no occasions of children going missing from the home. The use of physical interventions is extremely rare. On the only occasion that it was required, it was necessary to safeguard a child. The staff immediately update the children's risk assessments with any new behaviours, to ensure that all of the staff have access to the information.

The managers continually revisit paperwork and processes, to ensure that they continue to drive up the standards of care. They review the use of the service. The managers recently conducted research into the families who do not attend the coffee mornings or parties held by the home. They were successful in establishing the reasons for non-attendance. The staff addressed some of the issues raised, such as timing and transportation, and this has led to an increased level of participation. This in turn allows the children and parents to expand their friendship and support networks.

The staff work hard to make positive changes in the lives of children and their families. The service is flexible and responsive to the children's and their families' needs. The positive input from the home enables both to have a beneficial break. This continues to prevent family breakdowns and enables parents, who may have been previously considering asking the local authority to accommodate their child on a full-time basis, to feel empowered and revitalised.

Professionals spoke very positively about the work of the staff and their ability to work in partnership with professionals and families. They said:

- 'They have a good set of values.'
- 'They have very good, thoughtful communication and value the input from parents. Mum felt listened to and overcame the worry of him going into the care of other people. Managing that anxiety has improved [the child's] welfare.'
- 'I can only sing their praises. We have a great working relationship.'

Information about this children's home

This service is registered to provide short breaks for up to four children or young people who have learning and/or physical disabilities. A local authority owns and operates this setting.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/08/2016	Full	Outstanding
03/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
16/12/2015	Full	Outstanding
10/02/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection, we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference that adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service 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'.

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