

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC391503
Inspector	Rosemary Dancer
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Central Bedfordshire Council
Registered person address	Priory House Monks Walk, Chicksands SHEFFORD Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ
Responsible individual	Kenneth Harvey
Registered manager	Joyce Hunnibell
Date of last inspection	25/02/2014

Inspection date	07/11/2014
------------------------	------------

Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	outstanding
Quality of care	outstanding
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
-------------------	-------------

This home has a extremely positive impact on the lives of children and their families. Despite children only having short break stays, a few nights a month, the impact the home has had on supporting them to grow and develop new skills is impressive. This is because staff know and understand children's needs and capabilities exceptionally well, and work very closely with parents and professionals to deliver an excellent overall package of care. A social worker commented of a child they work with that there had been, 'fantastic improvements' and that the child was making 'phenomenal progress'.

Care planning is individualised and of a high quality. As a result staff provide young people with high quality support that keeps them safe and ensures their well-being is promoted to a very high standard. The care provided to children and the opportunities they have to experience new and interesting activities make a significant difference to their lives. A parent said, 'staff have a good and full understanding of my child's special needs.' A social worker commented that the, 'care and understanding of the needs of the children is one of the home's real strengths.'

The arrangements for the leadership and management of the home are very good and the manager drives improvements in the home consistently.

Three shortfalls were identified that have no or very limited impact on young people. These relate to the records maintained on physical interventions, making notifications to Ofsted about certain matters and formally agreeing with the police action that should be taken in the unlikely event of a young person becoming absent from the home or the care of the staff.

Full report

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
25/02/2014	Interim	good progress
22/10/2013	Full	good
04/03/2013	Interim	good progress
28/11/2012	Full	good

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
17B (2001)	ensure within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose of which shall include all points in regulation 17B (Regulation 17B)	26/11/2014
30 (2001)	ensure the registered person, following an event listed in column 1 of the table in schedule 5 that indicates that notification to Ofsted is required, are duly notified to the regulator without delay (Regulation 30 (1))	05/12/2014

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure the home's procedures for when a child is absent from the home are compatible with and have regard to Running and Missing from Care protocols and procedures maintained and managed by the police (NMS 5.6)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **outstanding**

As a result of the service they receive, children grow and develop skills and progress in many aspects of their lives. They make excellent progress in developing their confidence; this impacts positively on their self-esteem. Their self-esteem is also enhanced because they learn to take better care of themselves through developing their self-care skills. Some children have made improvements in their sleeping patterns and this means they are better rested for the day ahead.

The strong promotion of healthy living means that children have developed an awareness about the link between weight, fitness and the food we eat.

Children's participation is excellent. Their views are sought and children are listened to, whatever their means of communication. Because their wishes and feelings are seen as paramount they feel valued and this impacts very positively on their psychological well-being.

For some children transitions are difficult but over time, with support, they begin to deal with these inevitable periods in their lives far more effectively than had been thought possible. This means that they develop confidence and feel secure in their time away from their family. A parent stated, 'As my child is very demanding and clingy it (the short break) has helped her to socialise with others.' A social worker stated of the child they work with that the child has achieved a, 'big reduction in anxiety', and put this down to being a direct result of the work the home has done with the child and family.

Children learn new skills as a result of their time in the home through the access to excellent opportunities that they might otherwise not be provided with. Through these opportunities some children have developed their skills in concentration over and above that thought possible, and this has had an impact on their ability to learn and retain information.

Children's outlook on life is broadened by the opportunities provided to them by the staff to become better integrated into the community, for example through going bowling, walking and eating out in the community. For some these activities are something that they would not have been afforded without the input of the home.

Quality of care **outstanding**

A real strength of this home is the excellent relationships between staff and children. Staff are exceptionally patient and caring and children develop very secure and trusting relationships with them. This means that children progress exceptionally and are able to meet their individual targets.

Staff's ability to communicate effectively with children is impressive. Excellent attention is paid to staff training to ensure they are able to effectively communicate with any child cared for, for example through the provision of deaf awareness training. The ability to communicate effectively with children means that excellent attention is given to children's participation; their views are really valued and listened to.

Staff are persistent in breaking down the barriers to children achieving their full potential. Each child achieves small but significant steps and all achievements, however seemingly small, are celebrated. Staff have high aspirations for each child and provide support to them in a way that they can benefit from most.

Children's diverse needs are recognised and catered for to a very high standard. There is an individualised approach taken to supporting children to modify their behaviour and to develop new skills. Staff help children to set targets, in a style that is best suited to their needs. For example through the use of visual aids to mark their progress and this encourages them to progress further. The short-break stay for each child is part of a wider plan of care but it plays a significant part in ensuring that children experience positive time away from home. It also impacts positively on children's progress and development and supports them to enjoy time with their peers and others.

While children are reliant on staff and their parents to ensure their health needs are met, the attention paid to children's health during their short break ensures they remain as healthy as possible.

While educational needs remain the responsibility of parents, staff support children's attendance at school very well. This provides them with the best opportunity to reach their full potential.

Children are provided with an impressive range of interesting and stimulating activities. A parent said, 'Staff go out of their way to ensure my son had a happy stay.' Because their preferences are listened to and catered for their interest is sustained. Children really enjoy their time in the home, it is a time for them to have fun, learn new skills and interact with others outside the family setting. Parents are confident that their child is well cared for, one stated, 'my son says he always has fun at any of the planned activities.' Another parent stated she was, 'very happy I have nothing negative to say all is positive and I hope he will have many happy years here.'

For children who move on from the home the support is equally impressive. A social

worker said that the support from staff to the child and to the staff at a new home was 'fantastic' and has meant that he has settled really well in his new home.

The building is exceptionally well maintained, excellent attention is given to ensure that children are provided with an extremely stimulating environment. They are also afforded time to simply relax with peers and staff. A social worker stated that there is a 'homely atmosphere and dedicated staff who know the needs of the children and take pride in the service.'

Staff have excellent working relationships with parents, social workers and other agencies. This ensures that an integrated approach is taken children's overall care packages. A parent said, 'staff listen and respect my views as a parent and are happy to take on any requests I may have.' A social work manager said, 'the team work well with my team to get the best outcomes for children.'

Keeping children and young people safe good

Children are safe and feel safe. A parent said, 'I have faith that my son is in a safe and secure environment.' Another said that the home, 'is run very efficiently by very caring staff. I have every confidence in my child's safety and welfare when he is there.'

Staff have a clear understanding of each child's vulnerabilities and implement robust risk assessments to ensure children are kept safe. Staff are fully aware of how to deal with any issues of a safeguarding nature that arise. Likewise while bullying is not an issue in the home the staff and manager are aware of the potential for conflict between young people and deal with this effectively through diffusing situations before they become an issue.

Children do not go missing and it is unlikely that they would have the opportunity to do so due to the very high staff supervision levels and the security in the building. The manager has links to the local police who are aware of the complex needs the children have. There is written information for staff about how to respond should a child go missing. However, this has not been shared with the police to ensure that the home's procedures are compatible with the protocols and procedures maintained by the police.

This home does not use sanctions as children would not benefit from them due to their complex needs and levels of understanding. However, positive behaviour is promoted well. Behaviour management is a real strength of the home as staff are astute in understanding what each child can cope with, and set small but important and achievable targets. This spurs children on modify their behaviour and to progress further.

Physical interventions are rarely used and are only used in appropriate circumstances to avoid the risk of injury to a person or serious damage to property. Records are made and maintained of these interventions but these are not recorded in a non-tamper proof book and do not include all aspects required in regulations. For example, there is not a clear description of the type of hold used, nor a description of the action taken to avoid the use of the intervention and witnesses are not always named. This has no direct impact on the children but it means that full detailed records are not always made and there is a potential for records to be tampered with.

While there have been no safeguarding referrals required in relation to children in the care of the home, there has been a matter that has required investigation. This has been dealt with confidentially and effectively through an inter-agency approach and children have been safeguarded.

The environment is safe and well maintained and all health and safety checks are undertaken. Any maintenance issues arising are dealt with promptly. Staff recruitment is robust and this ensures that staff are suitable people to be caring for children with complex needs.

Leadership and management

good

There is a Register Manager who has been in post since February 2009. She is suitably qualified and skilled to manage the home and achieves a high standard of care for the children. A social worker stated of the manager that she is an, 'experienced manager who knows the children and who is open to development and learning.'

The leaders and managers understand strengths and weaknesses of the home and development plans drive improvements. A recommendation from the last inspection has been addressed and this means that children, during the time they spend in the home, can now access the internet to support their learning. There is good attention paid to monitoring the home and children's progress through internal and external monitoring systems; it is clear that the home has made a big difference to children and their families' lives.

There is a clear Statement of Purpose that informs parents and others about the aims and objectives of the home and clear accessible information for children to help them understand what the home can offer them.

The home is very well resourced and this ensures that equipment to meet children's needs is regularly added to and updated. The excellent attention paid to the maintenance to the fabric and internal décor provides young people with a 'home from home'.

The home is staffed by sufficient numbers of staff, some of whom have worked in the home for a long time. Staff are of a high calibre and really get to know and understand each young person. A parent said she is happy with the home because of the stable staff team who are all getting to know her child really well. Staff are well supported through e good training opportunities, good peer support and the formal and informal support from the managers. A parent stated, 'The respite centre is an excellent facility with wonderful, dedicated staff who really care about the needs of the children; keep up the excellent work, thank you.'

Records are clear and are up to date. They are securely stored and provide a good view about the progress children make as a result of the care they receive. While an issue had not been notified to Ofsted the matter, had been dealt with effectively through a multi-agency approach and as a result there was no negative impact on children.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The 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 relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.