

Children's home's inspection – Full

Inspection date	15/08/2016
Unique reference number	SC391503
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
Inspector	Sonia Hay

Inspection date	15/08/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Improved effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

SC391503

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- Children participate in an extensive range of community-based activities. This builds their self-esteem and allows them to widen their friendship groups.
- Parents and carers speak highly of the impact that the home has on their children. Parents and carers feel included in their children's care because of the proactive and effective communication they have with the staff.
- Children's views are actively sought through a range of highly effective communication methods, which leads to children participating in their care plans, with their views at the centre.
- Staff are creative and innovative in how they mark children's achievements.
- The staff team operates with a reflective practice model. Joint practice meetings with the local authority's social work team result in the development of highly effective joined-up strategies to support children to develop and progress.
- The manager is proactive in empowering staff to be solution focused. Each member of the team feels valued, which results in children being cared for by confident and highly motivated staff.
- The manager and deputy diligently conduct ongoing reviews of children's progress. This drives improvement in practice and in the experiences of the children.
- The home is maintained to a very high standard, which supports children to feel valued and to take pride in their surroundings.
- The home offers an outreach service to children who have moved on, to assist with the transitions to their new homes. This shows children that they are cared for and highly thought of beyond their time in the home.

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
03/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
16/12/2015	Full	Outstanding
10/02/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
07/11/2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
The home is outstanding because children benefit from a stable staff team that knows them well and works effectively with the children to support them to achieve aspirational goals. The team has exceptionally positive working relationships with the children, their families and external partners. Children experience thoroughly enjoyable respite stays, while receiving clear, consistent boundaries. They benefit from the holistic approach to their care that is achieved through the home's joint working with the local authority social work team. The pre-admission process includes home and school visits, and children and their families visiting the home for meals. Staff have an excellent knowledge of the children prior to the matching and placement planning processes. Admission to the home is conducted at an agreed pace to suit individual needs. Managers anticipate issues that may arise for children, and are highly flexible in their approach, to ensure that children and parents feel happy and secure coming for their short breaks. Each child's care plan is based on their individual levels of ability, and details two or three targets that staff support them to achieve throughout their stays. This ongoing assessment enables staff to recognise the smallest of changes and demonstrates that the children make continual progress. These targets address all aspects of the children's care, to ensure that they make progress that contributes to their well-being and emotional development. The staff are knowledgeable about the children's likes and dislikes and are able to identify triggers for changes in behaviour. The staff utilise highly effective diversionary techniques, which result in a minimal level of negative behaviour. A social worker said: 'Staff are fantastic at working on identifying and impacting on things that make a difference at home.' They gave an example of a child not allowing her family to wash her hair until the staff team had started to do it during respite stays. This demonstrates the positive impact of the visits and it has enabled the family to replicate the staff's approach. The social worker also described the positive impact that this is having on improving the child's personal hygiene and, in turn, her integration at school. Many of the children have complex health needs, and the staff actively ensure that the children's health and medical needs are addressed in line with their health and care plans. Staff undertake specific training in medical procedures and dispensing medication specific to the children using the service. This means that children	

receive a high standard of care from suitably trained carers.

All of the children attend local special schools, one of which is on the same road as the home. The children are able to walk to and from school with staff, increasing their levels of independence and minimising the issues with transitioning from the school to the home. The staff work well with the schools and are aware of each of the children's levels of attainment. Education targets are incorporated into targets set by the home. Staff actively ensure that the children complete any homework that is set during their stays. This ensures that the children continue to make progress and constantly aim to achieve and exceed goals.

Children's views are sought using pictorial children's requests forms. There is also a children's rights questionnaire in which the children can say how they are feeling about their stays. The children's responses form the basis of the next key-work sessions, with a summary communicated to the wider team at staff meetings. Each child has an 'all about me' book that summarises the essential information about the child from the child's perspective. This is a simple yet innovative way to ensure that the child remains at the forefront of the minds of the staff team. Children's views and wishes are firmly at the centre of their care and inform staff practice.

The development of the outside space has been carefully considered and sensitively managed to ensure that children are at the centre of any changes and have an outdoor experience that they can immerse themselves in and enjoy. They have excellent relationships with the maintenance person, who has developed an area that allows the children to experience growing vegetables and flowers. Wheelchair users are able to access the raised flowerbeds. During inspection, the children were able to identify their recently painted homemade bird boxes, which were drying in the window. The children are proud that they have helped to decorate the garden, which in turn has developed their attachment to the home and cultivated a sense of belonging.

Staff go the extra mile for the children, to promote their happiness and enable them to enjoy equality of access to events that other children enjoy as a matter of routine. One key worker assisted her key child to be a bridesmaid at her parents' wedding. The member of staff supported the child during the ceremony and reception and brought her back later in evening for her overnight stay. This staff member's dedication allowed the child to participate in a major family event that she would otherwise have missed.

A parent said: 'The home is an absolute godsend. I'm not sure how I coped without it.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
The managers are highly committed to safeguarding the children and acutely aware of the children's increased levels of vulnerability due to their disabilities. Managers constantly review the team's practice and use reflective practice meetings to discuss new approaches that can be utilised to minimise potential risk. Staff are well informed about new research and emerging issues that they need to consider, in order to keep these children safe. The manager thoroughly reviews case files and risk assessments and has introduced additional shift planning documentation. The positive impact of this is that staff are increasing the level of detail in their recording and evidence that they have reviewed the benefits and possible risks when they are planning the shifts and activities. The internal and external areas of the home are maintained to a very high standard, and the team conducts fire drills and other health and safety checks at the specified intervals. This ensures that children are able to explore and have a degree of 'free' play in a very safe setting. There have been no instances of children going missing. Staff spoken with were able to describe how they would report and manage any absence. Staff know how to raise any concerns about safeguarding, using the procedures in place in the home. They understand the whistleblowing policy and feel confident in describing what to do if they have a concern about staff or senior managers. This means that children are looked after by staff who understand how to promote their safety. The use of physical restraint is extremely rare as staff confidently and successfully use de-escalation techniques. Many of the children present challenging behaviour. However, staff understand the triggers and identify when behaviours are about to change. The staff successfully use diversionary techniques to manage behaviour. An example of this occurred when staff pre-empted the reaction of a child, who does not like strangers, to the inspection process. Staff were ready to divert him to an activity, inflating the paddling pool, to reduce his anxieties. The child was later able to show the inspector the pool, once he had adapted to a stranger in the home. The staff use their in-depth knowledge and their positive relationships with the children to manage negative behaviours.	

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
The manager has been in post since 2008 and holds a level 5 management qualification. The deputy manager has also been in post for a number of years. They both have high expectations of the staff, which underpin the ethos of the home and ensure the delivery of an exceptionally high-quality service. The home's statement of purpose accurately reflects the way in which the home is managed and operated. The managers constantly review practice and drive continuing improvement in the home to ensure that children receive the best possible care. Managers place children at the forefront of care delivery. The staffing rota is worked around the children's allocations, to ensure the best matches and to provide children with the level of care and expertise that they need for enjoyable stays. The managers provide the staff team with good supervision that is supportive and informative and assists them to identify areas for their professional development. The staff say that they feel that the 'managers lead by example'. The staff team is well established, and many of the team members have been in post for a number of years. This contributes to the stability and consistency of care that the children receive. A new staff member who recently completed the induction programme said that the level of training and the induction process is comprehensive. She said that she is thoroughly enjoying her role and described the managers as supportive, approachable and open to suggestions. The level of managerial oversight and support means that staff are well equipped to care for the children effectively. Managers know and understand the progress made by each child after each stay. They work with the key workers to assess and update targets, to ensure that children are encouraged to and motivated to reach their full potential. This emphasis on setting aspirational goals ensures that children continue to make progress, however gradual the pace. The staff have an excellent working relationship with the local authority social work team, which includes joint reflective practice meetings. Consequently, the children benefit from a joined-up approach to their allocations and assessments. A social worker described the team as a 'skilled staff group' that is 'calm and never fazed'. The managers have a good rapport with the schools that the children attend and with other external agencies. This includes the community health team that trains the staff in the use of gastrostomy feeds and other medical needs specific to the children placed. These close links support staff to develop their professional skills base and to keep their knowledge of working with disabled children current. This underpins the excellent care that children receive. All eligible care staff have completed the required level 3 training and two new	

staff members are currently undertaking this qualification. This means that children are cared for by a professionally qualified workforce that understands the children's needs.

Managers encourage staff to be proactive in putting forward ideas to support the children. They give staff responsibility for writing a brief report on how proposed change will benefit children and the likely impact. Staff risk assess new ideas, and managers review the proposed changes before signing them off. This engenders a culture of continuous improvement and practice to benefit the children that all of the staff are engaged with

The staff team has received many compliments and thank-you messages from families, which demonstrate the value that the parents attach to the service. Families value the short breaks, in the knowledge that their children receive high-quality, safe care. This enables families to benefit from the respite afforded to them by the short-breaks service.

The independent person visits on a monthly basis and identifies the strengths in the service and the areas for development. The manager uses the independent visitor's reports, along with her own internal auditing, to address any shortfalls and to drive continuous improvement. This means that children receive high-quality care that continues to evolve and develop in line with their needs and wishes.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of children looked after is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place. However, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or that result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

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 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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