

SC409502

Registered provider: Bedford Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is operated by a local authority and provides short breaks and respite care for a maximum of 5 children at any one time. Children may have physical and/or learning disabilities and complex health needs. The home currently supports a total of 21 children.

At the time of this inspection, 2 children were staying at the home. The inspector spent time with both the children.

The manager registered with Ofsted in January 2016.

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 June 2026

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	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 10 March 2026

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection:

At the last inspection in March 2026, serious shortfalls were identified in respect of how children are helped and protected, as well as in the leadership and management of the home. Ofsted issued a compliance notice under the leadership and management standard. At the monitoring visit on 30 April 2026, the provider had met the steps set out in the compliance notice.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/03/2026	Full	Inadequate
18/02/2025	Full	Good
23/08/2023	Full	Outstanding
22/11/2022	Full	Good

Summary of findings

Since the last inspection, the provider has made some improvements to the service, resulting in a better quality of care for children. There have been no safeguarding incidents, and professionals, families and staff have not reported any safeguarding concerns. Improvements have also been made in leadership and management. However, some areas remain underdeveloped and require further attention to ensure that progress is sustained and fully embedded in practice.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children feel comfortable and secure in the presence of staff and have developed positive, trusting relationships with them. Interactions between staff and children are consistently warm, nurturing and respectful.

Staff demonstrate a strong understanding of the importance of education and actively encourage children to engage and persevere. When children experience challenges or setbacks, staff advocate on their behalf to ensure that their needs are recognised and supported. As a result, children are able to access education that is better tailored to their individual needs. Education professionals speak positively about the effective working relationships they have with staff, which further supports children's progress and engagement in learning.

Children participate in activities they enjoy. They are also provided with opportunities and encouraged to try new things.

Professionals and families speak positively about the care their children receive. A parent said, 'They know my child well and have built a strong relationship with them. I cannot commend the staff highly enough.' A healthcare professional said, 'I have high praise for their service to children.'

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

Staff are assisted by detailed risk assessments and plans. These cover a range of topics, including children's daily routines, managing behaviour and other risks. They are effective and help staff know the children well and identify their triggers and risks. Staff consistently review the plans and follow strategies that help to keep children safe. Overall, staff understand the children's vulnerabilities and keep them safe.

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of therapeutic approaches and apply these effectively in their day-to-day practice. There have been no allegations against staff, no complaints from children, and no incidents of children going missing or requiring physical intervention. This has helped children to make positive changes to their daily routines, including safely developing some independence skills.

The home's fire risk assessment was updated by an external professional in October 2024. Some actions from this assessment have been resolved; however, there have been delays in leaders and managers addressing some actions to reduce the risk of fire.

Staff understand their child protection responsibilities. However, some members of staff lack confidence in, and are not fully familiar with, the organisation's whistleblowing procedure. This could leave children at risk if an incident were to occur that required staff to raise concerns.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Staff receive regular one-to-one supervision and annual appraisals. However, records lack detail, and supervision sessions do not consistently provide opportunities for staff to reflect on their practice or the children in their care. Furthermore, annual appraisals do not offer staff meaningful opportunities to discuss their performance or plan for their development. This lack of effective supervision and appraisal undermines the manager's ability to understand the strengths and development needs of the team.

Leaders and managers have reviewed the workforce development plan; however, they have not ensured that it includes all relevant information. As a result, opportunities may be missed to monitor staff performance and support development.

Staff make positive efforts to improve the home environment. They create personalised displays, including photos and interactive features based on children's interests and suggestions. This helps children to feel valued and promotes a sense of belonging in the home. However, the kitchen remains inaccessible to children who use wheelchairs, which limits their ability to participate in everyday activities and develop independence skills. Although plans for improvement have been considered, no changes have been implemented. In addition, required refurbishments have not been promptly addressed, despite concerns being raised by staff and children. As a result, the environment does not consistently meet children's needs or promote their comfort and wellbeing.

The manager is experienced and has a relevant qualification. She is supported by an experienced deputy manager. The staff speak positively about the home and are enthusiastic and energised. Staff say they feel happy working at the home and are supported by the management team to fulfil their role.

Feedback from external professionals is positive. A parent and a professional said the staff are good at communicating, which helps them feel supported and listened to.

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; and enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home, provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(i)(ii)(vii)) In particular, ensure that: all children can access the kitchen; improvements to the decor of the home are carried without delay.	20 July 2026
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)(c))	20 July 2026

In particular, ensure that:

staff supervision enables them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children in their care;

appraisals take into account, where reasonable and practical, the views of children and professionals who have worked with the staff member over the year;

as part of the performance management process, poor performance is addressed through a timely plan to bring about improvement.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all staff are familiar with the home's internal whistleblowing procedures. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.9)
- The registered person should ensure the home complies with relevant health and safety legislation. In particular, they should ensure that actions identified in the fire risk assessment are addressed without delay. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that there is a workforce plan in place that fulfils the workforce-related requirements of Regulation 16, Schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20). The plan should: detail the required management and staffing structure (including any staff commissioned to provide health and education services), as well as the experience and qualifications of staff currently working within the structure, and any additional training required to enable delivery of the home's statement of purpose; outline the processes and agreed timescales for staff to complete induction, probation and any core training, such as safeguarding, health and safety, and mandatory qualifications; describe the process for managing and improving poor performance; specify the process and timescales for supervision of practice (see Regulation 33 (4)(b)) and ensure that appropriate staff records are maintained. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)

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: SC409502

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Bedford Borough Council

Registered provider address: Borough Hall, Cauldwell Street, Bedford MK42 9AP

Responsible individual: Christian Weatherley

Registered manager: Sally Summers

Inspector

Anver Rose, Social Care Inspector

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