

# SC038276

Registered provider: Underley Schools Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This home provides care and accommodation for up to 48 children and young people aged between five and 19 with learning disabilities, complex needs, autism spectrum disorder and other associated mental health conditions.

There are two registered managers in post due to the size of the setting. Both managers registered in March 2021.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 4 March 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

### Inspection dates: 12 and 13 May 2021

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account**      **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected      good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers      good

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 16 September 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** not applicable

## Recent inspection history

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>Inspection type</b>	<b>Inspection judgement</b>
16/09/2019	Full	Outstanding
20/06/2018	Full	Outstanding
28/11/2017	Full	Good
11/10/2017	Full	Inadequate

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Children at this home make good and exceptionally good progress during their placements. They are cared for by staff who know and understand them well, and who make every effort to make their care experience positive. Staff and children were observed to have warm and sensitive relationships. Staff are skilled in directing, playing with and reassuring children. This helps children to feel cared for and understood. It also helps them to enjoy the time they spend with staff. Staff understand that children need to be nurtured to feel happy and safe. This nurturing care helps children to flourish.

Children moving into the home have detailed and well-planned transitions. They meet staff before they move in and, where possible, visit the home in advance. Detailed case studies show the extent of planning that takes place to ensure a smooth and positive transition. Children's views are sought before they move in so that staff can get their care right from the start. This includes an incredible amount of detail about the child's minutiae care needs.

The quality of children's plans and assessments is extremely high and shows how well staff know and understand the children in their care. Plans are highly individualised and are written in a way that celebrates everything positive about the child, their skills and achievements. The phraseology used in children's plans is non-stigmatising. The language communicates that children's behaviours are needs-led and are not displayed for negative reasons.

Managers encourage and reward staff who are forward-thinking and innovative in their practice. This results in staff being motivated to 'think outside of the box'. Staff and managers have introduced a variety of ideas to occupy, interest, motivate and involve children. There are many examples, including detailed theme nights where children learn about the world and get their 'passports' stamped with flags from the countries they have 'visited'. Children have been busy contributing to individual cookery books which show them in step-by-step photographs and instructions how to cook their favourite meals. Another example is involving children in designing and planning a sensory garden.

Managers are keen to hear every child's voice. Where projects do not interest some children, alternative ideas are put forward which are more in line with their interests, such as the development of a boxing gym. This is popular with a cohort of teenage boys.

Children with communication needs are supported by speech and language therapists. The speech and language therapy team devises communication strategies and helps staff to implement these so that children's communication improves. This has the added benefit of reducing their frustration, which has a positive impact on their behaviour.

As the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions ease, staff are starting to focus on accessing external activities. This helps children to increase their confidence in accessing the community and develops their independence skills. Young people who are soon due to move on from the home can sometimes be placed together in a bungalow where they have the opportunity to practise their independent living skills.

Feedback gathered from parents and professionals is positive. Several people spoke extremely highly of the care provided to children and of the unexpected levels of progress they make.

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

Children are supported and well protected. The home provides a safe environment and staff provide safe care.

One issue identified during this inspection was in respect of the management of allegations. On one occasion, an allegation has been made about a child being mistreated. Although this was correctly referred to the host local authority and the designated officer, the child's social worker was not promptly informed. Therefore, the social worker was not able to express their views about whether the child was adequately protected or whether the measures put in place were satisfactory. On another occasion, there was a delay in an internal investigation into an allegation relating to poor staff practice. This does not show good practice in allegations management and these issues have led to a requirement being made. Managers at the setting have taken prompt action to address these deficits and put steps in place to prevent recurrence.

Children's risk assessments are detailed and clear. Risks are appropriately rated. Staff are directed in how to manage and mitigate the risks identified for each child. Observations show that staff are highly skilled in diversion, distraction and de-escalation, which demonstrates that the strategies identified are being used and are effective.

Children's support plans are detailed and individualised. They capture the nuance and intricate details of how best to help and support each child.

Children are helped to take managed risks in line with developing greater independence. This includes, for one child, being allowed some time on his own, initially on the school grounds. Staff have listened to his wishes and feelings about this and have used a multi-agency forum to develop a safe plan for him. The child is delighted with the outcome. He could not wait for his first opportunity to try out his new freedom.

Physical intervention numbers are relatively high. This is due to the large number of children living in the home and the complexity of their needs. Physical intervention records are generally of a very high standard and enable the reader to understand

why the intervention was necessary and exactly what happened before, during and after each incident.

The responsible individual takes a proactive approach to ensuring that all staff understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding. He has planned a series of training events that cover different elements of safeguarding. The training draws on a variety of resources which also link into the legislation governing children's homes. This gives staff a more detailed understanding of the 'hows' and the 'whys' of safeguarding.

Safe recruitment practice is evident, which means that only those safe and suitable to work with children are employed.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

There are two new managers in post, who bring creativity to the role. They are ambitious for children and are determined to get the best out of the staff team to promote children's life chances and positive outcomes. They know the setting well and understand the strengths and weaknesses. They are forward-thinking, very organised, enthusiastic, and keen to introduce new ideas and plans.

The new management structure has created a 'head of care/responsible individual' role on site. This, as well as a team of four deputy managers, supports the managers in their role. Managers provide on-site support to staff at all times. This results in the staff team feeling well supported by managers. Staff told the inspectors that managers are readily available should they need them and often visit the bungalows to offer support, or just to be visible around the large site.

Staff also told the inspectors that it is helpful that all managers have been promoted through the career progression pathway from being care workers at this setting. They feel that this has ensured that managers put in place systems based on an understanding of the care worker role, and in line with best practice for children. They also said that any manager would cover a care shift should they be needed, which shows their commitment to supporting the children and the staff team.

Managers understand the importance, and challenges, of gathering children's views. There are systems in place to obtain the views of children with multiple disabilities and very limited communication skills. Managers listen and respond to those views.

Retention of staff is an area of difficulty due to the size of the staff team and the challenges of working with children with highly complex needs. The responsible individual is putting in place a system of rewards and benefits for staff who remain in post for increasing lengths of time. This helps to ensure that the staff team is trained, experienced and qualified, and provides children with continuity of care.

The independent visitor provides detailed reports which help to identify strengths and weaknesses in the service. Managers have developed a system to disseminate findings from independent visits to staff to help them feel more included and

informed. Managers' monitoring systems are embedded into practice, which ensures that they have a good oversight of the home and take action to address issues as they arise.

Managers were observed to have positive relationships with children and staff around the site. It is clear that they are familiar and on positive terms with each child, despite the large number of children living in the home.

## What does the children’s home need to do to improve? Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered persons must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Children’s Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the ‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’. The registered persons must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect must, in particular—</p> <p>provide for liaison and co-operation with any local authority which are, or may be, making a child protection enquiry in relation to a child accommodated in the home;</p> <p>provide for the prompt referral of an allegation about current or ongoing abuse or neglect in relation to a child to the placing authority and, if different, the local authority in whose area the home is located. (Regulation 34 (2)(a)(b))</p>	<p>9 June 2021</p>

## 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:** SC038276

**Provision sub-type:** Residential special school

**Registered provider:** Underley Schools Limited

**Registered provider address:** Atria, Spa Road, Bolton BL1 4AG

**Responsible individual:** Christopher Kirkbride

**Registered managers:** Samantha Middlehurst and Luke Finch

## Inspectors

Charlie Bamber, Social Care Inspector

Natalie Bennett, Social Care Inspector

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