

# 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.

### Inspection dates: 25 and 26 October 2022

**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:** 12 May 2021

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>Inspection type</b>	<b>Inspection judgement</b>
12/05/2021	Full	Good
16/09/2019	Full	Outstanding
20/06/2018	Full	Outstanding
28/11/2017	Full	Good

## Inspection judgements

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

Children benefit from well-planned introductions to the home, and they are suitably matched, taking into consideration their individual needs. Children are introduced to the home through visits, and staff spend time with them to understand their likes, dislikes and routines. This ensures that children are gaining confidence in their new surroundings and building relationships with staff. Furthermore, when children move on from the home, they are supported with good-quality transitions. This is done at the child's own pace, and this helps ease their anxieties.

Since the last inspection, each of the homes have had some redecoration in the lounge areas. These spaces are warm and welcoming, and each home now has new jacuzzi bathrooms with specialist lighting that fulfil children's sensory needs. Children's belongings fill the home, and their bedrooms are personalised. One child was excited to show the inspector the Halloween decorations in her home and her nicely decorated bedroom. As a result, children gain a real sense of pride and belonging in their home.

Books, games, and toys are in each of the homes. Artwork and photos are displayed throughout. Children's achievements are celebrated through case studies, newsletters and memory books. This supports their life-story work. When children leave the home, they can take the books with them as a reminder of their experiences.

The high staffing ratios ensure that children are supported in their day-to-day lives. Inspectors observed nurturing relationships between staff and children. Staff are skilled in understanding the children's complex needs. Detailed health plans are in place, and children have access to specialist support through the in-house therapists. This promotes children's health needs.

Staff engage children well, encouraging them to improve their fine motor skills in eating and drinking. As a result, children are learning important life skills. Children who do not use verbal language are encouraged to express their wishes and feelings using a variety of means, such as pictorial exchange systems, social stories and sign language. Children learn that their views are important. Staff care for them with dignity and respect.

Children's case records are regularly reviewed and signed by all staff. The records are written in a person-centred way. There is a great emphasis placed on multi-agency and partnership links.

Children are helped to develop their skills towards independence. They are making good progress in this area. For example, children are supported by staff with a step-by-step approach to learning skills in independent travel, cooking and personal care. This means children are well supported as they prepare to move on. One

professional said, '[Name of child] has made huge progress with his personal care needs in the short time that he has lived at the home.'

Managers and staff use creative and innovative ways to ensure that all children are involved. Projects such as the clean-up crew and the gardening club have given children new interests and hobbies. The children are given a wide range of opportunities and new experiences to enjoy. For example, all the children have recently enjoyed holidays of their choice. Children enjoy going to a specialist climbing club in the local area. As a result, one child has learnt more appropriate ways of climbing and this has seen a reduction in incidents.

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

Since the last inspection there have been three safeguarding incidents. Prior to these incidents, leaders and managers ensured that there were robust policies and procedures in place to protect children. Unfortunately, some of these procedures were not followed by staff. These were isolated incidents and were in relation to supervision of children and a medication error. Although there was a potential for children to be harmed there was no impact on the children.

Leaders and managers took swift and appropriate action to ensure that these incidents were addressed and lessons learned. Managers put additional safeguards in place to reduce any further incidents occurring.

Shortfalls were identified within the recruitment and vetting of staff. One new staff member did not have all the required references on file. This means that potentially unsuitable adults could be employed at the home, which could place children at risk of harm.

Children have good-quality risk assessments and behaviour management plans. These plans are child-friendly and provide staff with clear strategies to support children and manage risk. Staff spoken to demonstrated a good understanding of children's risks and vulnerabilities.

Positive behaviour is well promoted, and staff show care and understanding in their responses when children are distressed or upset. There is a wide range of de-escalation techniques used, for example 'change of face' and the use of weighed blankets to help children manage their emotions. Restraint practice in the home is used to keep children safe due to their additional needs. Records are detailed and robust.

Staff receive regular training in safeguarding, and managers assess staff knowledge through various quizzes and discussions. This helps ensure that safeguarding is a priority.

Children living at the home have complex needs and require constant supervision. As a result, the risk of children going missing from the home is low. There has been

one incident when a child went missing from home. Staff follow all necessary protocols in place, and children are offered independent return home interviews.

Leaders and managers respond efficiently and effectively to all complaints and allegations. Children know how to make a complaint, and there are child-friendly policies in place. The management team ensures that all actions are completed and follow up advice is sought from external professionals. This helps promote children's safety and well-being

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

There are two registered managers in post due to the size of the home. They are both suitably qualified and experienced in working with children with disabilities and complex health needs. Both managers have worked at the home for several years. They are well supported by a team of deputy managers. Together, their skills and experience provide the home with strong leadership. They are passionate and extremely child-centred.

The management team is organised and knowledgeable about the complex needs of the children. Staff encourage children to take part in their annual reviews and advocate effectively with professionals.

Staff say they are well supported. Staff are dedicated to improving the lives of children and improving their outcomes. There have been several new staff starting at the home. However, more recently, the teams have become stable, and children are experiencing continuity of care. Staff demonstrate care and respect to all children, and this is helping to build strong relationships between staff and children.

Staff use regular supervision sessions and annual appraisals to discuss their practice and reflect on their performance. This helps improve the quality of care provided. Staff are provided with a range of training which is specific and relevant to children's needs. The managers also deliver workshops within regular team meetings. This ensures that all staff have the knowledge and skills required to support children's additional needs.

## 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, 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
<p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children’s safety.</p> <p>The requirements are that—</p> <p>full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (3)(d))</p> <p>This specifically relates to ensuring that all appropriate references are sourced for staff working in the home.</p>	<p>9 December 2022</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 manager:** Samantha Middlehurst and  
Luke Finch

## Inspectors

Judith Birchall, Social Care Inspector  
Natalie Bennett, Social Care Inspector

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