

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 for up to 48 children and young people aged between five and 19 with learning disabilities, complex needs, autism and other associated mental health conditions.

Children live in one of the 10 bungalows or three small houses that the site is composed of.

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

There are currently 39 children living across the setting.

Inspection dates: 6 to 8 February 2024

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 25 October 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/10/2022	Full	Good
12/05/2021	Full	Good
16/09/2019	Full	Outstanding
20/06/2018	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children's moves in and out of the home are managed exceptionally well. One parent said: 'They are amazing, literally from the very first call they helped me and [name of child] through the process.' As a result, the parent said their child settled immediately. Introductions are tailored to meet children's individual needs. Recently, staff provided a child with an interactive video of the home to watch in the lead-up to their move to the home. Others receive pictorial welcome booklets and stories. Staff complete a series of visits to children prior to them moving into the home to ensure that all information is readily available from the start.

When children move out of the home, moves are well planned and children's achievements and memories are captured in a photo album. These serve as a lasting memory and visual aid of children's time in the home. Furthermore, where it is necessary, managers robustly challenge professionals and advocate for the children. For one child, this included the manager challenging the placing authority about his transitions and outcomes.

Since the last inspection, there has been extensive refurbishment to all areas of the homes. This includes new fitted kitchens, bathrooms and en suites throughout. The homes are warm and comfortable. Everything in the home is unique and personalised to each child. Children's individual interests are fully considered. Staff have been creative in making sensory wall boards. Bedrooms are decorated to children's tastes and personalities. There is a large range of books, sensory toys and games for children to enjoy.

Staff consistently encourage children and care about their welfare. One parent said: 'It is my child's second family.' A child said: 'I love it here, it's 10 out of 10.' Children take part in a wide range of activities. Over the summer months, the children have taken part in new experiences such as a recent holiday to Paris, theme parks, trips to the seaside and bowling. They also take part in lots of on-site activities.

All the children have made exceptional progress from their starting points. All children attend school on a full-time basis. One professional spoke about the collaborative working between education and the residential provision. This demonstrates that children benefit from a well-coordinated and seamless approach to their educational needs. Recently, two children have started at the local college after passing their GCSEs.

Staff encourage children to develop their independence skills in line with their needs and education, health and care plans. Children learn how to cook and wash their own clothes and dishes. One child is working on his fine motor skills to make his own sandwiches. Recently, two children have secured part-time employment in their

local community. This gives children belief in their abilities to work towards independence and a sense of pride in their achievements.

Children's wishes and feelings are at the centre of everything that happens in the home. They grow in self-esteem and confidence by having access to a wide range of communication tools that are bespoke to each child. Recently, one child has received support to understand grief and loss through a social story.

Children have regular opportunities to share their views, wishes and feelings. Additionally, children's voices are captured in daily conversations, house meetings and questionnaires. Children said that staff do listen to them. When children have made complaints, these have been treated seriously and responded to promptly.

Staff undertake high-quality direct work sessions that are meaningful to each child. They use creative strategies when children show anxieties and worries about attending routine health appointments and accessing specialist services. The use of these strategies means staff help children take part in appointments which were previously an unmet health need.

Children's records are written to a very high standard. Staff use a trauma-informed approach to support the children and this is embedded into children's plans. Records are individualised and child-centred. As a result, children's plans are supportive and helpful to them.

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

There is a strong and proactive approach to safeguarding. Staff have an excellent understanding of the risks that children may face. These are well documented and individualised. Children have trusted relationships with staff and know who they can talk to if they worried or upset.

Research-informed practice is widely used and consistently practised throughout the organisation. Recently, leaders and managers have considered the findings from a serious case review and a robust safeguarding audit has been completed. When areas of development were identified, managers took prompt action to address these.

Children say they feel safe and have age-appropriate access to the internet. Staff carry out good-quality work with children to help them understand the risks associated with social media.

Fire safety is prioritised. Each child has an individualised fire evacuation plan. Regular fire drills take place and evacuations are conducted for all children who are new to the home to ensure that they are familiar with the procedures. Recently, some children visited the local fire station. This provided them with an educational opportunity to learn about the importance of fire safety.

Positive behaviour is continually promoted. One child said that staff had helped them to manage their behaviour and they were grateful to the staff. One professional said: 'Staff have developed children's confidence to manage situations and provide children with safer boundaries.' As a result, children are making progress in their social, emotional and psychological well-being.

Staff are skilled in recognising when children are distressed or upset. This means physical intervention is only used as a last resort to keep children safe. When children are struggling, staff seek additional support from on-site clinicians and strategies are adapted in line with research-based practice. As a result, incidents have significantly reduced because of the nurturing relationships and knowledge staff have to assist the children.

Some children are dependent on staff support to help them meet their personal care needs. This is always managed in a sensitive way and promotes children's privacy and dignity.

Safe recruitment practice is in place. New staff are appropriately vetted to ensure that children are cared for by individuals who are safe and suitable. When allegations have been made, managers have taken appropriate action. They liaise with local safeguarding partners to share all safeguarding information.

The arrangements for medication are safe and effective. There are robust systems in place. When there has been a medication error, leaders and managers work closely with the on-site nursing team. Consequently, they have introduced additional competency checks and improved processes to ensure that medication is administered safely.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The managers have a wealth of experience and a clear vision and ethos for the homes. They know the children very well. They are dedicated and visible across the homes. They both have high aspirations for all the children. Together with the staff team they are excellent role models to the children.

There is a skilled team of deputy managers. The management team has an excellent oversight of the quality of care. The managers have a detailed development and workforce plan. The plans are used to continually drive improvements in the service. The management team has an excellent understanding of what is working well and consistently considers any areas of development.

The organisation's therapy team provides detailed training that is bespoke to children's needs, such as autism, communication and attachment. There are also fortnightly sessions with staff on reflective practice and trauma-informed care. All mandatory training is up to date. Staff speak enthusiastically about the excellent training opportunities they receive to enhance their knowledge and practice.

Supervision is regular and of a high quality. Changes have been made to the supervision format since the last inspection. This means that sessions are more detailed and informative. There is a reflective culture within the teams that underpins staff practice. New staff receive a clear and effective induction. Regular team meetings take place and provide staff with excellent opportunities to share important information with each other and generate new ideas.

Feedback from staff and professionals is extremely positive and confirms a real sense of teamwork. One member of staff said that they receive fantastic support from the management team, and another said: 'I didn't know job satisfaction was a thing until I worked here.' One professional said: 'The care team have totally welcomed and accepted the clinical support. They are an absolute joy to work with.' Another professional said: 'Staff go over and above to support [name of child]'s needs.'

A parent said: 'Staff have pulled out all the stops for [name of child].' Another parent said: 'Staff always promote family time and when I see the photos I see [name of child] is living their best life.'

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

Judith Birchall, Social Care Inspector

Alexandra Pearson, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024