

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.

The manager registered with Ofsted in March 2021.

There are currently 33 children living across the setting.

Inspection dates: 18 to 20 February 2025

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: 6 February 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/02/2024	Full	Outstanding
25/10/2022	Full	Good
12/05/2021	Full	Good
16/09/2019	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

All houses are welcoming and provide a warm and homely environment. Staff work with children and their families to ensure that each child's bedroom is highly personalised. One child scored the home 10 out of 10, and another said, 'It's a great place. The staff are brilliant and living here makes me happy.'

The care and support children receive are exceptional. Children's moves in and out of the home are well planned, and their journeys are uniquely captured. The manager completes detailed assessments to help identify children's needs. One child, who recently left the home, did so in a well-planned way. Following this move, the manager reflected on the child's progress and experiences to inform future learning and development.

Children take part in a range of opportunities and experiences. For example, one child has learned how to drive and recently passed their driving test. Others have enjoyed holidays abroad, and staff use social stories to successfully help children to overcome their anxieties of flying for the first time. Children who have experienced loss and bereavement are supported by staff who use a range of different approaches tailored to each child's needs and understanding.

Care is individualised for each child. Staff work closely with other professionals, including the speech and language team, to ensure that children receive consistent care and support. Staff practice is underpinned by research, which means the impact of children's life experiences is understood. As a result, children are making progress in their bedtime routines, independence and life skills.

Staff encourage children to be part of the local community. Children have joined a variety of local football, rugby and dance clubs, which helps them to grow in confidence. The community presence and engagement are a key strength of the setting. Staff are innovative in the activities they arrange. For example, they arranged a series of visits from the local fire, police and lifeguard services, which helped children to understand fire and water safety in a fun way.

Children's wishes and feelings are at the centre of everything. They have access to a range of bespoke communication tools and are making exceptional progress using their preferred communication methods.

Children's achievements are celebrated in monthly progress reports that are shared with family and professionals. Children take part in key-work sessions to help them understand a range of issues. Staff use worksheets in line with children's abilities to help further embed learning.

Feedback from parents is extremely positive. One parent spoke of their child making amazing progress in their learning and said, 'Staff have changed my child's life.' Another stated, '[Name of child] is flourishing and could not ask for anything better.'

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

Children are kept safe in the home, and safeguarding practices are highly effective. Staff have a clear understanding of children's needs and vulnerabilities and the risks they may be exposed to. Risk management processes focus on safeguarding each child, and they are reviewed regularly and updated. When a medication error has occurred, leaders and managers have worked collaboratively with family and health care professionals to improve systems and processes.

Staff develop highly individualised behaviour support plans. As a result, restraint practice is proportionate and effective. Recently, the management team has completed workshops designed to support staff to improve their de-escalation skills. Furthermore, there has been effective use of research-informed practice from the on-site therapists, which has resulted in a reduction in incidents.

Staff educate children about internet safety, and children are suitably supervised when using devices. Children take part in direct work that is focused on boundaries and how to stay safe online. However, further support is needed to develop one child's understanding of online risks as they currently have no access to the internet and are moving towards adulthood. A recommendation has been made to address this.

Recruitment procedures and practices are safe and effective. Managers have completed safer recruitment training. All staff are checked and vetted before starting work. These checks ensure that only suitable adults are employed to work in the home.

Children know how to make a complaint, and the manager and responsible individual are quick to respond and resolve any matters in a positive way. The children have regular visits from an advocate, who provides an additional opportunity for them to speak independently to a trusted adult.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Since the last inspection, there have been some changes in the management structure. This has been highly effective and provides the manager with robust oversight. Staff report they are happy with the changes. They say they feel supported and valued through various incentives, such as employee of the month. A family member nominated a staff member for a recent national childcare award for their commitment to their role. Staff say they love their job and communication is excellent.

The registered manager has excellent knowledge of the children and demonstrates a child-centred approach. His commitment and dedication to improving children's life chances are evident. He makes excellent use of monitoring systems to look at patterns and trends across the home, including those in relation to restraint practices.

Staff have supervision and yearly appraisals that are detailed and reflective. Leaders and managers are ambitious and consistently promote staff development. Any poor staff practice is swiftly identified and addressed to ensure that practice improves. Team meetings are regular and provide an excellent forum for reflection and information-sharing.

Staff are highly skilled in understanding the children's needs because they are given an abundance of training opportunities. They are trained in therapeutic approaches to ensure they understand the impact of children's trauma.

Children's views are central to the home, and they are consulted alongside their participation in house meetings. Leaders and managers ensure that children receive feedback about any requests they make.

Feedback from professionals is complimentary. They spoke highly of the staff team's ability to provide a loving, caring and nurturing environment. One professional said, '[Name of child] has really thrived living in the home; staff are exceptional in helping with his social skills and supporting them to understand other people's personal space.'

What does the children's home need to do to improve? Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff help each child to prepare for any moves from the home by developing their emotional and mental resilience to cope without the home's support. This includes educating children on how to access the internet safely by participation in direct-work sessions. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.27)

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: Luke Finch

Inspectors

Judith Birchall, Social Care Inspector

Suzanne Birchall, Social Care Inspector

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