

SC370703

Registered provider: Surrey County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is run by the local authority. It provides care for up to 12 children with learning or neurodevelopmental disabilities. There are four apartments that are suitable for providing short- or long-term care.

There were six children living in the home at the time of this inspection.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since 28 July 2023.

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 February 2024

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: 1 March 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/03/2023	Full	Good
23/03/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness
13/04/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
13/11/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The children's well-being is a primary focus for staff, who ensure that they enjoy fun experiences. Staff support the children to engage in different activities of choice, including listening to music, cooking along with staff or enjoying time out in the community at a local park or funfair.

Staff are proactive and regularly seek children's wishes, feelings and views. They encourage verbal communication from children and use the children's preferred communication aids. These are readily accessible and well used by staff. This ensures that the children's views are well understood. Children are supported to make choices regarding their meals and the activities that they would like to do. This reinforces to them the message that their views are important. Consequently, children feel valued.

Staff are committed to supporting the children to make progress. While they are mindful of the children's disabilities and vulnerabilities, they remain aspirational and successfully help children to make individual progress. For example, children improve their communication and independence skills, learn more positive ways in which to express themselves and re-engage with education. The high standard of care provided by staff has contributed to children making significant progress.

Effective partnership working between staff and other professionals involved in the children's lives ensures that the professional network is kept informed of the children's changing needs and progress. This ensures that children's needs are well met holistically. Social care professionals value the care and support provided by staff and the great progress that children make. One external professional said that the staff are 'invested' in the children and referred to staff as 'the dream team'.

Children are introduced to diversity positively, through being cared for by a diverse staff team. Staff reinforce the message that everyone is to be treated equally and have created an inclusive environment for the children. Emotions boards and visual and symbol-based option boards are displayed throughout the home, and children's participation is encouraged. Certificates celebrating children's achievements are displayed in their bedrooms and other parts of the home. These serve as positive reinforcement and allow children to enjoy a sense of pride.

Staff recognise the importance of preparing children well before they leave the home. Careful planning and support from staff have led to children experiencing successful moves to their new homes.

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

Staff are caring and attentive in their approach towards the children. They know the children well and act quickly on their nonverbal cues. A child's parent and social care

professionals spoke highly of the service and were confident that the children are well cared for and safe. A parent expressed their wish for their child to remain in the home, as they are 'very much loved and cared for' by the staff, who understand their child's complex behaviours well.

Staff have a good understanding of children's needs and behaviours. They are guided by individualised risk assessments in place for each child. These provide clear guidance to help staff promote children's well-being and ensure their safety. Children are settled and rarely go missing from the home. On two occasions when a child left the home, appropriate action was taken by staff. This helped to ensure the child's safe return.

Staff care for the children sensitively, using de-escalation techniques when incidents occur. They use physical intervention as a last resort to ensure the safety of children and/or others. Records of these incidents clearly indicate the actions taken by staff to support the children. However, reflective conversations do not take place consistently with children and staff following incidents. Furthermore, the manager does not consistently review records of these incidents. This results in missed opportunities to highlight areas for improvement.

Staff ensure that children's health needs are met. On the rare occasion when a medication error has occurred, appropriate actions were taken and learning was used to inform future practice. For example, improvements have been made to processes, such as the relocation of the medication room to a quieter area of the home.

Children are cared for by a consistent core staff team, supplemented by agency workers when needed. Employment checks for permanent staff are carried out to a good standard. However, the manager does not currently have oversight of checks carried out for agency staff by the recruitment agency. As a result, the manager does not have access to all relevant information relating to agency staff's suitability to work with children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is led by a manager and senior leadership team who are strong advocates for the children. They are committed to ensuring that the children enjoy positive experiences and that they are not limited by their vulnerabilities. They have successfully inspired the staff team to be child-centred and proactive in supporting children to have a voice.

The manager has implemented different strategies to obtain children's wishes and views. These measures are well used by staff and have helped to strengthen the relationships that they have with the children.

Staff feel well supported by the manager and senior leaders. Staff are guided in caring for the children through reflective discussions during team meetings and

supervision sessions. They are also provided with a wide range of relevant training. This supports them to understand how best to meet the children's complex needs. However, some training for several staff is overdue. This means that staff may not have up-to-date knowledge that could potentially enhance their practice.

The manager is keen to ensure that children continue to receive good-quality care. The introduction of set staff teams (supplemented by agency staff) based in each of the apartments in the home has provided children with greater consistency.

The manager is acutely aware of the home's strengths and areas for development. There are plans in place to further improve the service. These include establishing stronger record-keeping, following the transition to a new electronic recording system. Additionally, recruitment is in progress to fill existing staff vacancies, and there is focus on the development of a programme aimed to extend children's independence skills to a greater level.

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

- The registered person should ensure that all incidents of control, discipline and restraint are subject to systems of regular scrutiny. To ensure that their use is fair, reflective conversations are to take place with children and staff following all incidents involving the use of restraint. The manager is to also review the appropriateness and the effectiveness of the measure used. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.36)
- The registered person should ensure that the recruitment of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. This includes ensuring that the manager has oversight of employment checks carried out by agencies for agency staff. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)
- The registered person should ensure that records demonstrate that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs and that the manager understands their key role in the training and development of staff in the home. Staff should complete training in a timely manner. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)

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: SC370703

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Surrey County Council

Registered provider address: Quadrant Court, 35 Guildford Road, Woking, Surrey GU22 7QQ

Responsible individual: Paul Thomas

Registered manager: Allison Wykes

Inspector

Sasha Reid, 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://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

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