

SC035625

Registered provider: Rowden House School Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is on the same site as a special school and offers care for up to 30 children with learning disabilities.

Care is provided across 8 houses in the grounds of the school.

The school is open to children living at the home and day students. The inspectors only inspected the social care provision on this site.

The manager registered with Ofsted in August 2020. She is very experienced and holds a range of appropriate qualifications. Since the last inspection she has successfully gained her level 7 in leadership and management.

Inspectors spent time with the children. Some children shared their views about what it is like to live at the home.

Inspection dates: 3 to 5 August 2026

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 1 July 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/07/2025	Full	Outstanding
10/06/2024	Full	Good
11/09/2023	Full	Good
28/06/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Summary of findings

At the time of the inspection, there were 19 children living in the home. Since the last inspection, six children have moved into the home and six have moved out.

Children are making consistent positive progress. They are effectively supported by staff who have a well-informed understanding of their needs. Family members and external agencies speak highly of partnership working and the standard of care provided to the children.

The registered manager continues to develop her skills and is a consistently strong and competent leader. The leadership team have a clear understanding of the strengths of the service, and the areas of staff conduct, record keeping, policy, staff de-briefs after incidents and consultation with children need to continue to improve.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children receive carefully planned introductions to their new home and staff teams based on their individual needs. Prior to any moves, a multi-disciplinary team complete a thorough assessment. Families and the children's views are also gathered throughout the process. For example, one child had their bedroom decorated the same as their bedroom at home. This careful consideration helps new children settle in well.

When children move out of the home and on into adulthood, managers and staff work in close partnership with parents, professionals and the staff from the new service. Careful planning supports smooth moves out of the home and helps the children prepare for their new futures.

Staff successfully help the children make positive progress in all areas of their lives. For example, all the children attend the on-site school. Children who historically did not attend school are sensitively supported back into fulltime education. Staff work closely with school staff and actively help children in the classroom.

Children enjoy participating in a wide range of social activities and events. Children who were previously socially isolated now engage in a wide range of enriching activities. Children spoke about and shared photos of recent holidays, the 'strictly come dancing' prom and the annual 'in bloom' inter-home garden competition.

Children's health needs are successfully met. Children who historically did not attend appointments or tolerate treatment are supported by individualised desensitisation programmes. They now go to the barbers for a haircut, wear prescription glasses and undergo procedures such as vaccinations and blood tests. Children were unable to participate in these important activities.

Staff are proud of the progress the children make. This is celebrated and recorded in memory books. Managers and staff liaise with parents and a range of internal and external professionals when setting targets for the children. This increases consistency and progress not just in the home but at school and when the children are with their families.

Staff are skilled in communicating with the children and helping them make day to day choices. They understand children's methods of communication and ensure that resources are readily available and in use. As a result, the children understand day to day choices available to them and their expected routines. These communication methods are not being consistently used in other areas of the children's lives. For example, to share praise and achievements, to consult with the children prior to important meetings or to produce care plans that are accessible to the children using their chosen method of communication.

A key strength of this service is the work undertaken alongside the children's families. Family members describe an 'inclusive approach' and 'staff working in close partnership', this supports them to remain actively involved in their child's life. Staff encourage families to visit their child at the home. There is on-site accommodation and space dedicated to families to have time together. Children are supported to visit their families and stay in touch. Staff also support days out with families and visits home, so that children can enjoy extended times with them.

The homes and their gardens are welcoming and personalised with the involvement of the children and their families. The grounds are well maintained, and the children enjoy a wide range of accessible play equipment and additional sensory resources. The leadership team continue to refurbish and develop the homes and resources for the children this maintains them to a high standard.

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

Careful assessment and planning mean that the staff understand the children's risks and work to reduce them. Children have high staffing ratios, and no child goes out alone. All the children benefit from an approach to risk management that increases their independence according to their ability and understanding.

Managers and staff understand their responsibilities to safeguard children and promote their well-being. They have good insight into the children's complex needs and vulnerabilities. They are skilled at supporting the children to communicate their needs and managing situations when the children become upset or frustrated. They intervene sensitively and in line with children's plans. As a result, most incidents are de-escalated quickly, reducing the likelihood of harm to children.

A range of approaches including social stories help the children to express their views, understand positive behaviour and the effect their actions may have on others. This helps the children to understand expectations, build safer relationships and experience

more social situations. The organisation also employs an advocate who visits on a regular basis. They feed observations back to the management team and represent the children as required.

When physical restraint is used, the intervention is necessary and proportionate to keep the children safe. Records of staff de-briefs, and actions taken by the leadership team after incidents, are not consistently demonstrating considered long-term support for staff members emotional and physical wellbeing. De-briefs are also not consistently exploring if the record of the incident is an accurate account of what has happened.

When there are concerns about staff practice, managers take them very seriously. They are diligent in carrying out full investigations and taking actions to safeguard the children. Staff are subjected to disciplinary action if their practice falls short of the expected standard. The registered manager has a proactive approach and a commitment to continually upskilling the leadership team to support them to manage staff practice and conduct. For example, additional training in supervising staff and managing conflict. Training sessions are also planned in cultural inclusion. The leadership team would benefit from the wider organisation considering the known patterns and trends of staff conduct to explore further strategies to support the leadership team moving forward.

A significant piece of work has been completed by the registered manager to strengthened staff practice and reduce the number of medication errors. This has been successful in upskilling staff and reducing incidents. However, medication procedures are not clear about when an error will be reported to Ofsted. Strengthening this, will provide improved clarity and consistency of practice across the leadership team.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is dedicated to the children and works hard to support positive outcomes. The 8 houses are overseen by 4 managers who know the children and staff teams well. The leadership team makes effective use of internal and external quality assurance processes. They inform a detailed development plan that has time limited aims and objectives that work to maintain good standards and develop practice.

Staff receive a high-quality induction and ongoing training that are underpinned by therapeutic models. The programme of training is regularly reviewed and updated to meet the needs of the children. For example, over the last 12 months trauma and attachment training has been delivered to all staff across the school site. Continually developing staff practice supports the workforce to be appropriately skilled and competent. This contributes positively to children's safety and progress.

Staff also receive regular supervision, annual appraisals and attend staff meetings that support the ongoing development of their practice. Feedback gathered from staff was complimentary about the registered manager and leadership team. Staff feel well supported and say that managers at all levels are visible and approachable. Staff say that they can raise concerns, knowing that managers will take action. One member of

staff stated: 'The leadership team provides clear guidance and support, encourages reflective practice, and ensures staff have access to regular supervision, training, and opportunities to develop their knowledge. This creates a positive culture where safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, concerns are acted upon without delay, and continuous improvement is encouraged.'

There is highly effective partnership working between the staff, professionals and children's families. Staff work closely with education colleagues and the clinical team, which includes an occupational therapist, physiotherapist, speech and language therapist, health liaison officer and psychologist. Professional practice is shared across teams. Partners feedback that communication with the manager and staff is excellent. This is also clearly reflected in a wealth of compliments recorded about the care of children at the home. The registered manager is confident in challenging external professionals where necessary to ensure that the children's needs are prioritised.

Parents and social workers were positive about the care, support and progress of the children. One social worker stated: 'I would like to commend the staff and the senior management team for their professionalism, expertise, experience and unwavering commitment to the child. Throughout my involvement, I have observed not only their skills in managing the child's complex needs but also their genuine care and enthusiasm for supporting their progress. It is evident when staff speak about the child that they are invested in their wellbeing and achievements. The same warmth and positivity are evident during family visits, where staff actively support and encourage meaningful family relationships.'

The leadership team have systems in place to ensure required documents from placing authorities are up to date and available to staff teams to support them to meet the needs of the children. Staff have access to records via an electronic recording system. They also recorded onto this system. This system is audited by the leadership team. Some handwritten paperwork is not legible or transferred onto the electronic system for staff to access. In some cases, entries onto the electronic system are delayed or unclear. This does not support the staff to remain well informed.

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
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that – helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to – lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)) This specifically relates to - the wider organisation, considering the known patterns and trends of staff conduct, to explore further strategies to support the home's leadership team. de-briefs providing good support to staff involved in an incident and establishing if the record of the incident is an accurate account of what has happened.	30 November 2026
The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who – take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to – ensure that staff -	30 November 2026

help each child to understand how the child's views, wishes and feelings have been taken into account and give the child reasons for decisions in relation to the child.
(Regulation 7 (1)(c) (2)(a)(iii))

This specifically relates –

to using children's communication tools to share praise and achievements, to consult with the children before important meetings and to produce care plans that are accessible to the children.

Recommendations

- The registered person must ensure that medicines are administered in line with a medically approved protocol. This specifically relates to when Ofsted is notified of a medication error. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)
- The registered person must ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.04)

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: SC035625

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: Rowden House School Limited

Registered provider address: 1 St. George's, Vernon Gate, Derby, Derbyshire DE1 1UQ

Responsible individual: Mark Ryder

Registered manager: Iwona Makal

Inspectors

Dawn Bennett, Social Care Inspector
Sophie Hills, Social Care Inspector

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