



Statement of Purpose

Merryfields

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Statement of Purpose

Name of Home: Merryfields
Telephone Number: 01494 444138

Our Home



Merryfields offers residential short break services to disabled children and young people. All children and young people accommodated for residential short breaks at the home are aged between 5 and 18 years old and live in Buckinghamshire. The home is commissioned by Buckinghamshire Council and Buckinghamshire health commissioning group.

The home works within a legal framework directed primarily by the Children Act 1989, the Quality Standards 2015, and the Children's Homes Regulations 2015. We promote and work towards the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

The number of nights offered to each child and young person reflects the needs identified in the children and families assessment completed by the placing authority. Staff are aware of the principles underpinning the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and ensure that children and young people receiving in excess of 75 nights have all their needs met.

When a child or young person receives in excess of 75 nights the home will ensure:

- That there is evidence that contact is made and relationships built with local health, education and leisure services to ensure each child has an individualised plan to ensure their holistic needs are met
- Link workers will visit the young person's school to discuss progress and co-ordinated support
- Link workers (or delegated duty) will attend school reviews and incorporate the agreed targets into the young person's support plans
- In the event of a young person who receives in excess of 75 nights and is excluded from education, the home will work with placing authority to ensure a range of experiences are accessed to promote flexible learning opportunities. These experiences will be recorded with due consideration given to achievements within the national curriculum key stages
- The home will work with relevant agencies and actively support the reintroduction of young people into formal education
- The home will ensure that each child/young person is registered with a GP and a dentist (other health services as appropriate), and that appropriate level of engagement is achieved. Where required the manager will ensure that staff resources are released to support the young person in accessing relevant appointment
- The home only accepts referrals for Buckinghamshire Council and as such the reporting systems are direct to the placing authority
- Link workers will work with placing authority to promote timely transition plans, Young people will be supported from the age of 16 years to identify their needs, wishes and aspirations for their adult life

Merryfields is part of the Buckinghamshire Short Break Service managed by Action for Children. The home is situated in the Cressex area of High Wycombe with the town just a bus journey away, and with local venues such as the park, cinema, bowling, supermarkets and restaurants easily accessible and within walking or easy travelling distance.

We deliver services in line with the local authority's expectations, and this is monitored by their commissioning team. There are 14 bedrooms in total, 7 on Sunbeam and 7 on Rainbow which offer a variety of sleeping options to meet the children and young people's needs. However, we are not commissioned to fill each bed on a nightly basis, there are nights when part or all of the service is closed and groupings will be led by the assessment process. We are currently closed on Wednesday and Sunday nights and alternate weekends. Merryfields is equipped with specialist moving and handling equipment. Ceiling hoists are fitted to various rooms in the house including bedrooms, bathrooms and a number of the communal living areas. Some bedrooms and bathrooms are linked by the hoists reducing the need for multiple moving and handling interventions during personal care routines. The range of specialist equipment gives the home real flexibility in working with children and young people with diverse needs and ensures that all children have choices of sleeping, personal, living and play environments

Living and play areas also have specialist equipment such as seating, tables, IT equipment and toys to ensure all children and young people are able to participate in activities within the home. The home has activity/play rooms, a soft play room, 2 multi sensory rooms and three large garden areas which are equipped with a range of outdoor play and leisure furniture and equipment offering opportunities for quiet activities, active play, sports and the pursuit of hobbies.

Merryfields has two kitchens – the one in Rainbow House is a fully equipped industrial kitchen. The kitchen in Sunbeam is a domestic kitchen and is accessible for children and young people with varying needs. This kitchen is wheelchair accessible and used to offer children and young people the opportunity to participate in preparing themselves light meals and snacks. Main meals are prepared and served primarily by our cook, but appropriately trained staff will also cook meals.

The home also has a laundry facility and has office space on-site but set away from the main living areas

Action for Children Model of Care

We work with children and families to understand and provide support that meets the child's individual needs. We work with other professionals to develop a good understanding of the child's needs and wherever appropriate we work with them towards achieving shared outcomes for the children and young people.

We invest time to build open and honest relationships with each child and family. We understand that the child will have a view of how they wish to spend their time and be cared for while at Merryfields, and that the child's primary carers have a wealth of knowledge about their child's needs and wishes. We seek to achieve consistency of care for each young person by working with children and families to create individualised support plans.

Merryfields ensures we support children and young people to achieve positive outcomes in all areas of their development. Individual outcomes are identified, planned and reviewed for each child to ensure that the service makes a real difference to each child and family.

We seek to offer each child a sense of belonging when they visit Merryfields by offering regular visits with familiar peers, wherever possible children are offered the same bedroom when they stay and, unless in an absolute emergency, are not asked to move bedrooms during the course of any one visit. Children and young people are able to bring familiar items such as toys or bedding from home to personalise their bedroom at Merryfields if this helps them feel safe and comfortable during their short break

We believe that whenever possible and safe a child should be in a family setting and seek to offer a service that while putting the child at the centre of our planning also considers and responds to the needs of the whole family. This model allows us to offer breaks at times that benefit the whole family. Parents retain full parental responsibility while their child is staying at Merryfields. Where possible we will offer a high quality quick response service for emergency care in times of acute need. We consider requests for extra and emergency care by balancing the risks presenting within the circumstances leading to the request alongside the quality of the experience of each child accommodated, the suitability of the peer group match, including social needs, strengths and vulnerabilities, and the status of vacancies and staffing ratios.

Who we care for

Merryfields is one of two residential short break services in Buckinghamshire and is part of an Action for Children integrated short break service available to disabled children and their families. This integrated service also includes The Grove residential service in Aylesbury and Bucks Activity Project which delivers group activities for disabled children during evenings, weekends and all school holidays.

All children and young people who receive short breaks at Merryfields live in Buckinghamshire, are aged between 5 and 18 years, and have a learning disability, sensory impairment and physical disabilities. Many of the children and young people also have additional needs such as complex health needs, augmentative and/or alternative communication needs, complex social needs, behavioural support needs, autism, moving and handling needs and/or sensory impairment.

Referrals - All children and young people are assessed by a social worker and the child and family's circumstances will demonstrate a need for a residential short break service. The social worker will present the case to referral panel for approval. If agreed at panel and a suitable vacancy exists or is expected, Merryfields staff will visit the child and the family to establish whether Merryfields is likely to be able to meet the child's needs.

If the placement is agreed as in the child's best interest, we will proceed with a planned introduction/assessment to the service. Each child's visits are planned in line with an agreed care package. All care packages and patterns are regularly reviewed in partnership with social care and families to ensure our services continue to meet the needs of children and families. This may result in changes to care packages and patterns such as a change of nights, or an increase or decrease in the number of nights offered.

Emergency care – will be offered to children and young people who are known to the service. In exceptional circumstances Merryfields may accept an emergency referral not known to the service but this decision will be guided whether we can reasonably expect to meet the child's needs and the emergency placement will not adversely affect or increase the risks to the existing group of children accommodated.

What we do

The link worker will gather information on the activities and interests of the children attending Merryfields and where possible staff will facilitate these preferred activities into the outings and activity plans supporting individual and group activities.

Cultural and religious needs are discussed as part of the referral process and we endeavour to support children to observe their wishes and those of the families. Activities would be discussed and planned to include a whole peer group in developing their understanding of the diversity of their peer group.

Communication needs are discussed as part of the assessment process and when necessary appropriate training will be given to accommodate these needs. We work closely with other professionals in supporting these needs.

A wide range of on-site play and leisure activities are available to children and young people. These include visits from various workshop/entertainment groups

As a short break service we welcome parents/carers and extended family to visit a young person at the home. These visits are agreed to ensure they don't have a detrimental effect on the group as a whole. Any restrictions on contact with specific individuals will be recorded in the child's file and visits will be managed in accordance with those restrictions.

No child is ever released into the care of a person not known to us without the specific authorisation of the family. We ask the person involved to produce evidence of identity in these circumstances. We reserve the right to keep a child here if we have any concerns regarding the person collecting them – in these circumstances the social worker will be contacted, or Social Care Emergency Duty Team, to notify and agree further action.

Young people staying at Merryfields have the right to contact their parents/carers and we will support and facilitate this. We will help to agree a pattern of calls that will be convenient to all parties concerned and assist in the use of the telephone.

Our staff- Please see appendix 1

The Merryfield's staff team includes Registered Manager, Coordinator, Team Leaders, Senior Residential Workers, Residential Workers, Nurses, Business Support Officers and a cook. We also employ contract cleaners through a long standing contract, while maintenance of the building and grounds is undertaken by preferred suppliers sourced via Action for Children's procurement procedures. Merryfields works with a small number of specific domiciliary care agencies that have been agreed as preferred suppliers by our procurement team, to cover staffing absences and vacancies where needed. All staff have relevant DBS clearance. The home employs a diverse staff team including different ethnicities, cultures and ages.

We deliver support up to 24 hours day and so staff work on a rota basis covering the whole period including nights and weekends. To provide the greatest level of flexibility, Merryfields offers a range of contractual patterns of work – this includes fulltime, part-time, annualised and casual contracts. We promote an inclusive partnership working model and all staff will build relationships with the children and families with whom they work.

Each child will be allocated a Link Worker who will be responsible for working with the child with regards to the individual's placement, support needs and outcomes planning and reviewing. The Link Worker will also be the main point of contact for liaison with families and relevant professionals and is responsible for the updating the child's file

Team Leaders work with the children and young people and are also responsible for rota planning, supervising staff and managing the day to day activity of the home. The Service Coordinator and Team Leaders also deputise for the Registered Manager as required

Nurses also work directly with the children and young people and take Link Working responsibility for individual children. In addition to these duties, the nurses also oversee all health care plans – supporting and advising colleagues on best health care practice and outcomes for each individual and monitoring the administration of medication and clinical procedures practice and records. The nurses also support the learning and development of their social care colleagues to promote positive health outcomes for all children and young

people. Nurses will be responsible for undertaking clinical procedures where the intervention is deemed unsuitable for a worker to undertake. The interventions are defined in the Action for Children administration of medication and clinical procedure policy and procedures.

Residential Support Workers are appointed to different levels of responsibility reflecting their experience and skills. Merryfields seeks to promote new opportunities for learning and development for all staff. This approach allows less experienced staff to learn while 'buddied' by a more experienced, skilled worker. In addition to the direct care and link work that Senior Residential Workers undertake with children and families, many are also allocated either short term or long term tasks/projects which promote the smooth running of the home.

Business Support Officers provide administration support for staff, and business support for the home.

We employ a part time cook who is responsible for menu planning, food ordering and the upkeep of the kitchens including health and safety and food hygiene. The cook prepares main meals offering a varied menu and responding to individual dietary requirements. In the cooks absence other staff will prepare meals following the rules of the kitchen environment.

The Registered Manager and Team Leaders work together closely to support and develop staff and promote and maintain positive working practice across the service.

SUPERVISION

Action for Children has a supervision policy and procedure. All staff members (including new starters) receive regular supervisions. The frequency of supervisions may be increased as and when required dependent on the development needs of individual staff members.

Staff members on very short hour contracts and casual staff receive supervision once a quarter. Opportunities to attend team meetings are available monthly with an expectation staff will either attend or familiarise themselves with the content of the meeting via the recorded minutes. All supervisions are recorded, and records are stored securely online.

All new staff members are subject to a six-month probationary period and receive a comprehensive induction. The home promotes a culture of informal supervision, reflection and learning opportunities for all staff. Formal notes are kept securely online and are confidential to the staff and their managers. Ofsted inspectors and Regulation 44 visitors may access these during social care inspections.

Temporary Agency staff are given an initial induction to the project and receive supervision once every 3 months or more frequently depending on the frequency of their working pattern.

In line with Action for Children policy, each member of staff will have an annual appraisal which will identify performance outcomes and development needs for individuals in relation to the business needs of the service. Casual staff receive regular supervision and appraisal of performance is ongoing throughout this process.

Nurses also receive clinical supervision from an independent source funded by Action for Children

Our policies

Action for Children has an intranet where all policies are stored, reviewed and updated in line with new legislation and guidance. Our homes policies and procedures are based on these.

Safeguarding Policy

Action for Children has a Safeguarding Framework which contains all the policies, procedures, forms and guidance that relate to safeguarding and child protection. These are regularly reviewed and updated by the Head of Safeguarding.

It is the responsibility of the Merryfields manager to ensure that Action for Children safeguarding framework is understood and implemented in the house. In addition, following the Bucks Safeguarding Processes.

The role of supervision is central in safeguarding practice and all members of staff are required to familiarise themselves with the Action for Children Safeguarding Framework and the local authority safeguarding procedures. All staff receive base-line training in safeguarding and additional learning opportunities are offered through various forums such as advanced training levels, workshops and discussion groups

We have a local policy for monitoring and surveillance this helps keep our children safe and is only used for this purpose. Monitoring and surveillance are never used to replace or supplement staffing levels. Rotas ensure that enough staff with the relevant experience are always on duty to support the children.

Some doors at Merryfields are lockable, we do not routinely lock any of the doors apart from the laundry door, electrical cupboard in Sunbeam house and the managers office door. This is to ensure the children's safety. On rare occasions we may need to lock other doors for example the kitchen door, an assessment will be put in place to evidence the reason for this decision.

Anti- Bullying Policy

Our service has a clear understanding amongst staff, children and young people, parents and carers as to what bullying is and how we deal with it. We define bullying as something which happens in a relationship which involves some form of hurtful abuse of power and occurs on a number of occasions. It can be persistent. One person or a group can bully others. There is a deliberate intention to hurt or humiliate another person. We address it by ensuring

- Staff take steps which encourage the reporting of bullying
- Staff are not tolerant of bullying in the project and early signs of minor bullying are acted on.
- Young people are encouraged and enabled to work together to identify their own problems, causes and solutions.
- Staff recognise when a child or young person may need protection because of bullying and take action to ensure appropriate safeguards are put in place
- Staff reassure children and young people subjected to bullying that they are not to blame and ensure they receive support

Staff recognise that bullying can happen within staff groups, between staff and the children and amongst the children themselves taking different forms such as:

- Physical pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching and any other forms of violence including threats
- Verbal name calling, persistent teasing, spreading hurtful rumours
- Emotional Racial taunts gestures, excluding anyone from an activity or group work, ignoring or not talking to someone, laughing at or ridiculing someone, taking or threatening to take or damage someone else's property
- Sexual unwanted physical contact or abusive comments

Children who run away or go missing from care

All staff are aware of the risk indicators for the possibility for children and young people to run away or go missing from home or placement. The identification of possible risk of running away or going missing is addressed in safeguarding assessments and plans.

All the vulnerable children and young people are offered advice and support to alert them to the dangers of running away and going missing and alternative strategies are discussed to help the child or young person to seek alternatives to running away

Our staff remain vigilant to the cause of the distress that is resulting in running away or going missing and resources should be used to address the distress to avert further episodes of running away or going missing.

Our staff should be aware of the increased risk of running away or going missing for children and young people living away from their families. We recognise that Looked after Children have a significantly higher incident rate of running away and this is considered in care planning.

Unauthorised absences are very unlikely to occur - the main door is opened by a fob, which is never knowingly given to a child. If a child learns to use the fob, or staff suspects it is known, extra measures are taken to safeguard the individual. The back gardens are all fenced and gates are locked. If it is known that a child is likely to climb fences, staff are extra vigilant in this area. Many of the children and young people are unable to make an informed decision regarding their safety and vulnerability should they leave the building without staff support. We provide this security to the external perimeters of the building and grounds in order to promote maximum independence for the children within the home environment

In the unlikely event that a child is discovered to be missing, then we would implement our immediate procedure:

- Check when, where and by whom last seen.
- Initiate a search of the building, grounds and locality.
- If child is missing, the police will be contacted, and they will follow the 'Missing Person's Procedure'
- If there are access disputes within family - possibility of abduction? The family/police will be alerted immediately if this suspected.

From an outing:

- If child runs off – s/he must be followed and/or kept in sight by a member of staff wherever possible
- If a child is missed - immediate and rigorous search of area is undertaken

- If necessary and practical, return rest of party to Merryfields, leaving one or two member(s) of staff on site
- Enlist assistance of other staff, security or venue personnel, and if safe and supervised members of the public - emphasise the vulnerability of child.
- If child is missing, the police will be contacted, and they will initiate the "Runaway and Missing from home and Care Protocol

Anti discriminatory policy

We are committed to promoting equality, valuing diversity and working inclusively with children, families, our staff and other agencies. We uphold these principles in everything that we do and this helps to define our actions, behaviours and practices. We promote an inclusive organisational culture, built on fairness, respect and dignity for all children, families and colleagues. We do this by challenging and addressing inequalities, discrimination and celebrating and embracing the diversity that exists. We take a zero tolerance approach to discriminatory practices.

- All staff will receive Action for Children Equality and Diversity training, in order to meet the needs of children.
- We endeavour to recruit a diverse group of staff representative of the cultures of users of the service.
- Staff from a range of different cultures/religions help to ensure awareness of different needs, and are able to speak to the children/families in their own language and help to avoid misunderstandings that may arise from language differences. We use the interpreting service if this support is needed
- Specific training is given to staff on issues relating to disabled children. These include understanding and working with children who display behaviours that challenge, children with a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder, and supporting children who are profoundly disabled and have multiple disabilities.
- We also provide pictures, toys and games that reflect differing cultures - We are helped in this by families, who tell us what is important to them.
- Staff training may include the use of signing and other forms of augmentative and alternative communication, to facilitate equality of opportunity.
- Advice will be sought from Human Resources on incidents that indicate discriminatory behaviour by staff and may result in disciplinary action
- Incidents of discriminatory approach by parents/carers/visitors will be followed up.
 1. Discuss with line manager best course of action
 2. Meet with person, if appropriate, and discuss incident
- Incidents of discriminatory approach by children to other children/staff will be followed up.
 1. Discuss with line manager
 2. Discuss at team meeting, if appropriate
 3. Discuss with child

Children's Rights Policy

Our approach to Children's Rights is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention says that every child has:

- The right to a childhood (including protection from harm)
- The right to be educated (including all girls and boys completing primary school)
- The right to be healthy (including having clean water, nutritious food and medical care)
- The right to be treated fairly (including changing laws and practices that are unfair on children)
- The right to be heard (including considering children's views)

The home strives for good practice in all areas of service delivery and promotes children's rights as follows:

We support children in their right to childhood by helping to keep them safe – offering a proactive support service to families to reduce the risk of family tension and breakdown. Our services are compliant with all safeguarding, and health and safety legislation. We offer children accommodation in well maintained adapted premises, organising the visits so children can use a familiar bedroom to promote opportunity for relaxation and sleep in a safe environment. Children and young people are offered a range of play and leisure activities within group and individual settings. Children have opportunities to access local community facilities during their leisure time

We support children in their education see below

Physical – we offer activities that help to develop gross motor skills and spatial awareness such as bicycles, trampolines, stretching out, walking etc., and fine motor skills –puzzles, painting, threading, building construction toys etc.

Cognitive – The home offers a range of activities and equipment all of which promote cognitive development where children are encouraged to explore the world and think about patterns, information, risks, choices, and finding solutions to problems. These activities range from listening to a story, painting a picture, water play through to using playground equipment on a visit to a park. Staff support children to achieve, learning from experiences by giving support as needed while allowing children time to test their thinking. Staff respond to and encourage each child's individual form of communication.

Emotional – the home strives to ensure that children visit with peers that they have built relationships with over time. Children joining the group after a new referral are introduced in a planned way wherever possible, but every child new to the service, even in times of emergency placement, will be given opportunity to be introduced to their peers and a sensitive transition into the group setting. Likewise, we seek to ensure that familiar staff are available for each child. Each child has an individualised support plan which will identify how they need and wish their care to be delivered. Merryfields offers short breaks and most children are primarily with their own families, but during periods of extended stays, staff will facilitate contact between the child and family such as phone calls and talking to the child about his or her family (unless there are any agreed restrictions on contact)

Social – although we recognise the value and need for individual and quiet time for children, we also encourage them to participate in activities alongside their peers - working collaboratively on a project or just sharing time and space together. We promote a social environment during mealtimes, with children eating together whenever possible.

Creative – we encourage creativity through art and craft activities, listening and dancing to music, making patterns with objects and sounds, and letting children take a lead in designing their own play routines.

We promote each child's health by practising in compliance with Action for Children's Administration of medication and clinical procedures policy – please see below for more detail

We promote equality and fairness ensuring all children are treated with dignity. Care plans identify the level of support each child requires to meet their personal care needs and staff support is offered to this level, thereby giving the child as much privacy and independence as possible. Information is gathered and stored in compliance with Data Protection Act 2018 and only shared with relevant people and with the appropriate consent in place. Children are offered choices with regards to their day to day experiences and all have access to local community facilities

We believe children have the right to comment on, and influence matters that affect them – please see below

How we consult

Action for Children aims for children and young people to become involved in initiatives across all levels and departments and where appropriate, across the organisation. Participation is key to the daily work of projects

Link workers work closely with individuals and those that know them well to develop and support the best communication methods for them

Children and young people are engaged in the development of their placement plan, the activities and accommodation at Merryfields. The children's views and opinions are sought as part of their 6 monthly placement review and we seek the children's opinions on outcomes they would like to work towards.

Children make decisions on the day to day experiences within the home and about the activities they would like available at Merryfields. Whenever possible children are actively involved in the development of particular areas such as decoration of Rainbow and Sunbeam especially their own bedrooms.

Parents and Carers are also asked to comment on how effective the home is as part of their child's review process. The home operates an 'open door' policy with regards to encouraging families to contact the home to discuss any concerns or queries they may have.

Action for Children has a complaints policy which the home uses as its procedure for responding to formal complaints. Wherever possible, complaints are managed and responded to at a local level, but Action for Children does employ a Customer Care and Complaints Manager to offer support and advice to service managers.

How we support positive behaviour

Behaviours that present risk or are inappropriate, have a purpose and a function, and are often a form of communication for those who are not able to get their needs met in more

acceptable ways. By being calm and safe role models staff and carers can help them to learn these skills, or they may be supporting their families and carers to help them do this.

Restraints/restrictive practices of any kind are only ever used as a last resort – that is where there is no alternative and there is immediate danger or risk of harm to the child or others. Action for Children is committed to Positive Behaviour Support and is proactively working towards eliminating the use of restraint. This means carefully monitoring methods of behaviour support and working together with children, young people and their families to help them develop skills and increase the potential for a future filled with positive opportunities.

The wellbeing of children and young people is a priority, and services actively work to lower the risk of dangerous or harmful behaviours. All harmful behaviours have a risk assessment which identifies any interim safety strategies and is part of a personalised behaviour support plan (My Plan). My Plan sets out how children and young people are to be encouraged to get their needs met in less harmful ways and how staff will support them to do this. Young people, their family, social worker or advocates contribute to content of their My Plan.

Merryfields operates within Care Standards Act, Children's Homes Regulations, and the Action for Children Behaviour Support Policy and Standards. We place emphasis upon the proactive and positive support of behaviour through the development of mutually respectful relationships between children and staff. We encourage, acknowledge and value positive behaviour through praise and appropriate reward, while providing children with opportunities for constructive activities and access to legitimate outlets for their frustration and anger.

We aim to deescalate and divert children from behaviour that is unacceptable i.e. adversely affects others and/or promotes a negative image of the child (socially unacceptable behaviour). Individual Placement Plans will provide guidance for areas of behaviour support, along with planned sanctions as agreed if diversion does not work. This could include removing the child from the situation, or physical restraint if there is the risk of injury to themselves or others.

All child discipline, sanctions, violent incidents and near misses are recorded on the appropriate form. The staff will only restrain a young person where there is significant risk of injury to that young person or any other person in the vicinity, and only if the restraint itself doesn't create a greater level of risk. Behaviour Support Plans are discussed and agreed with parents.

Merryfields uses Team Teach strategies and interventions to guide our behaviour support practice. We have internal trainers on the staff team who provide training and updates, assess competence, and advise on behavioural support matters. The trainers also receive regular updates of their own training and competence

The site does use some surveillance on the perimeters of the building eg security alarms on doors, electronic key fob system. There is also a monitoring system in bedrooms (listening system and door alarms) which can be activated/de-activated as appropriate. However, these systems are more in regard to alerting staff of a potential risk while offering children greater independence/privacy to spend some time alone. The door alarm system used at Merryfields alerts staff when a bedroom door is opened so staff can check this movement of a child. Both the door alarms and sound monitors are used to safeguard the children rather than monitor or observe specific behavioural incidents. The activation of the surveillance system would result in staff attending to the child

How we support children's education

We support children in their education by facilitating healthy sleeping patterns and providing a planned calm morning routine ensuring that each child is emotionally and physically ready to attend school on time. We value the child's school experience – talking to the child about their day during the evening, supporting children with their homework and working with education professionals. We promote global learning by offering children a range of activities to help develop skills across all the domains of development.

Day to day communication is facilitated between the home and the child's school with home school diaries, which is completed by Merryfields staff.

Staff attend school reviews of children, whenever possible and key people are invited to the care reviews.

Merryfields staff attend school functions when invited and available. The home supports children to take necessary items to school whether these are daily items or special occasions such as items for Harvest Festival or food for a party.

Staff will visit schools as part of the referral assessment and Link Workers will visit children's schools on occasions during the child's placement at Merryfields. The staff undertake these visits with the knowledge of the child and family

How we support children's health needs

Our service ensures that children and young people have access to universal specialist healthcare whilst receiving a service. We believe in empowering and supporting them to take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing wherever possible. We ensure children and young people have the right medicine; clinical procedures are safely administered, and appropriate therapy is carried out by staff and carers who are trained and competent.

Merryfields provides health care in accordance with Action for Children policy and procedures. The home employs qualified nurses who oversee the health needs and clinical practice in the home. The nurses receive independent clinical supervision (please see staffing section above)

Trained and competent workers also undertake medication administration and clinical procedures in line with the authorisations given within the organisational policy

Merryfields delivers a short break service to disabled children, some of whom have complex health needs. The staff strive to meet the following outcomes for children who have significant health needs

- The child or young person maintains or improves physical health and/or meets individual development milestones
- A child or young person with complex health needs sustains maximum independence

Where appropriate these outcomes will be discussed, agreed and evaluated at the child's care review. All health care plans and medication records are monitored by the qualified nursing staff.

Merryfields follows strict protocols on the receipt, storage and administration of medications. Children who require medication during their short break have written details and consents recorded on file. The procedures require that all prescribed medication is received in its original packaging with the pharmacy label and expiry date clearly visible. Any request for changes to the prescription can only be authorised and administered with written consent from the child's GP or consultant.

The home will also accept over the counter medication in its original packaging as long as other relevant information is presented by the parent/carer.

The full requirements of the medication policy consent, presentation of the medication and records will be discussed with parents during the assessment and introductory period. The home reserves the right to seek medical or pharmaceutical advice if unsure of any issue relating to medication whether prescribed or brought over the counter.

The home operates a similar response to a child's attendance for a short break service when unwell as school's do. The general principle is that a child will not usually be admitted if they are already unwell and especially not if they have a contagious infection. If a child becomes unwell during the course of their stay a decision will be made regarding action to be taken. Factors which will influence this decision include

- How poorly and/or distressed the child is
- Whether the condition is contagious – and how unwell might other children become if they contract the infection
- The risk of increased stress in the family home/the risk of family breakdown
- The time of the day or night and whether the child can be cared for and the risk of infection spreading minimised until a more suitable time for the child moving can be organised
- Whether the home has the staffing resources to provide the additional support needed to the child during the time of the illness
- In the event of a child needing to be admitted to hospital, Merryfields will endeavour to send a member of staff to accompany the child in the ambulance and remain with them at hospital until the parents/carers arrive. There may be occasions where staffing levels do not allow this to happen, as it will leave the other children without sufficient support – we would not delay the admission to hospital in these circumstances but seek to provide the emergency service personnel with as much detail as possible.
- Parent/carers are notified of any emerging or sudden onset of medical emergencies and the decisions of the home regarding the immediate management of the situation
- Routine appointments such as eye-tests and dental checks remain the responsibility of the parents. However, if appropriate and staffing resources allow staff will accompany families to health appointments in a supporting role

How to Complain

We are committed to excellent customer service. We regard complaints as an opportunity to turn a negative experience for a young person or their family into a positive one, as well as an opportunity to learn and to improve. The context for our complaints procedures is effective customer care, with service standards and service level agreements where

appropriate, and with regular dialogue and review with customers of the service provided. Leaflets regarding how to complain are available in several languages.

Complaints should be addressed in the first instance to Charlotte Rogers or Vicky Stone at Merryfields so they can work with you to resolve the concern locally. You can contact Charlotte or Vicky on 01494 444138 or by emailing Charlotte.Rogers@actionforchildren.org.uk or Victoria.Stone@actionforchildren.org.uk

Complaints can also be made or escalated directly to:

Customer Care Complaints Manager

Action for Children
3 The Boulevard
Ascot Road
Watford
WD18 8AG

Ofsted

Ofsted National Business Unit
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD
0300 123 1231
Enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Buckinghamshire Commissioning Team (Children's Services)

County Hall
Walton Street
Aylesbury
Bucks
HP20 1UA
01296 395000

LADO

New County Offices
Walton Street
Aylesbury
HP20 1UA
01296 383962

Contact details

Registered Manager

Charlotte Rogers

Responsible Individual

Sam Oliver

The home is owned by:

Buckinghamshire Council

Registered Manager



Charlotte Rogers
17/06/2025

Responsible Individual



Sam Oliver
17/06/2025