

SC457423

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This home provides care for five children aged between 14 and 19 who have severe learning difficulties, social and/or communication disabilities, and children who have autism spectrum disorder.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since February 2020.

Visit dates: 1 to 2 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 8 October 2019

Previous inspection judgement: requires improvement to be good

Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for
- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings from the visit

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Staff provide routines and structures that help the children to feel safe. The inspector observed positive interactions between the staff and the children and strong, trusting relationships were evident.

The children and their parents said that the staff have supported them to remain in contact during lockdown, using video calls. The children send weekly letters, containing photos of activities that they have been doing, to their parents.

Once lockdown lifted, the children were enabled to meet with their families in the safety of the garden, while observing social distancing rules.

The organisation's school sent a teacher and two learning support workers to the home to ensure that the children's education remained consistent. These staff formed part of the home's 'bubble' to ensure that the children were kept safe.

The children completed a questionnaire about how they felt about lockdown and how the staff can support them. Social stories have been used to support the children to understand the restrictions due to the virus. The children were able to explain the impact that the restrictions had on them and the reasons why they have not been going out.

The safety of children

The staff have been proactive in ensuring that the children understand the risks due to the pandemic by using social stories and discussions as part of their education. This has helped the children to feel safe at the home.

One child, who has a good understanding about staying safe in the community, has recently been able to go with staff to a local shop and buy his magazines. He was able to talk about the reasons why he had to wear a mask and wash his hands when he returned to the home. The staff understand the need for children to have some normality while staying safe.

The staff continue to safeguard the children well. Training for new staff has been provided by the manager. Since lockdown has been lifted, some staff have received face-to-face training using the school hall to ensure social distancing.

One child was feeling unsafe around an older child and was able to express his concerns to the staff. The staff reassured the child that he was safe and were able to ensure that the children only spent limited time together. The older child has left the home. The younger child was able to express during the inspection that he is happier now.

Leaders and managers

A consistent staff team has been in place throughout the pandemic. The manager has worked shifts to limit the number of staff having to come into the home. This has helped to keep the children safe and provide them with consistent care.

The independent visitor continues to monitor the home. The manager sends relevant records and the visitor has spoken with the children and staff via video calling. The regional manager has been overseeing the visitor's reports, to ensure that they accurately reflect the home and contain a wide range of views from other professionals and parents.

Two complaints from neighbours have been resolved quickly and effectively.

Partnership working between the manager and external professionals is effective. As a result, the manager and other professionals involved in the care of the children share information between them that enables them to work in the best interests of the children.

The staff said that they feel supported by the manager and senior managers to keep the children safe. However, not all staff have had regular supervision.

The manager has met seven requirements from the last inspection and one requirement will be repeated.

The manager has met all the recommendations from the last inspection.

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
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>undertake appropriate continuing professional development;</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience.</p> <p>(Regulation 33(4)(a)(b))</p>	22/10/2020

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC457423

Registered provider: MacIntyre Care

Registered provider address: MacIntyre Care, 602 South Seventh Street, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK9 2JA

Responsible individual: Maria Fiddimore

Registered manager: Laura Alford

Inspector

Trish Palmer, Social Care Inspector

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