

1253711

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide care for three children. The home offers care for children who have social and emotional difficulties. The home is privately owned.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since September 2018. The registered manager has not been in day-to-day charge of the home since 1 March 2019 and has notified Ofsted that she is to voluntarily cancel her registration in October 2020.

In July 2019, a manager commenced in post to cover the registered manager's absence. This manager was registered by Ofsted in May 2020. She is undertaking the level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management for Residential Childcare.

Visit dates: 8 to 9 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 22 January 2020

Previous inspection judgement: Improved effectiveness

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

Two children have continued to live at the home since the last inspection, and one child has moved into the home. The opportunity to meet with the registered manager prior to moving gave the child the assurance needed to feel comfortable with coming to live at the home.

Children benefit from consistent, committed staff who try hard to meet their needs. A child told the inspector that his needs are being met and that the staff are fair.

Staff are diligent in ensuring that the cultural and faith needs of children are well met. For one child this has included ensuring that a prayer mat is available and that he can attend a place of worship. The support of staff of the same faith has helped to raise the child's awareness to the core beliefs and practices of his religion.

When children have not been able to attend school, staff support children to continue to learn at home. Staff worked creatively with teachers to ensure that children can resume their learning in school at the earliest opportunity. For one child this included being involved in virtual meetings with staff and his teachers. Being included meant the child understood the expectations, and he was quickly able to increase his attendance. When a child does not have an identified school placement, staff work well with them and the relevant education professionals to identify suitable provision. This means that one child has been able to start school in the autumn term, following a considerable period of absence.

Staff recognised the limitations to off-site activities as a result of the pandemic and sought to increase the leisure opportunities available for children at the home, including purchasing a trampoline and other sports equipment. New bikes helped the children enjoy the outdoors and physical exercise. With restrictions easing, children have had opportunities to take part in a variety of community-based leisure activities, including a trip to a theme park. One child has been supported to join a local rugby club, which is helping to increase his fitness and helping him to get to know people in the local area.

Children are able to share their views about their care, through informal conversation with staff and through more formal meetings with staff and peers. Staff and children discuss topical issues. This has included discussions about the COVID-19 pandemic and events related to racism in society. As a result, children develop an increased awareness of and reassurance about things that are happening around them and that affect them.

Most children have continued to keep in touch with people who are significant to them. However, one family member told the inspector that staff had not been in contact with her. Gaps in communication with family members reduce the opportunities to ensure that the child is being provided with the appropriate support.

The safety of children

Children have individualised plans and risk assessments which reflect their needs. Regular reviews of these plans enable staff to keep up to date with the agreed measures to help reduce risk and keep children safe. There have been no instances of children going missing from the home.

When children have struggled with their behaviour, staff have shown perseverance and have sought advice and support from specialist services. Using agreed de-escalation techniques helps to ensure that significant incidents are infrequent, and the use of physical intervention is rare. When significant incidents have happened, staff ensure that the child has been spoken to and that plans are reviewed to take account of the child's views. There has been one allegation made to staff at the home about the conduct of staff. This was reported appropriately to the child's social worker and the designated officer. Working in line with agreed protocols helps staff to keep children safe.

Agreements with children about internet use and mobile phones increase children's safety. However, during the inspection age-inappropriate DVDs and games were seen in children's bedrooms. In addition, staff were unable to tell the inspector whether parental controls are in place or are needed in order to prevent children having access to inappropriate content via televisions in their bedrooms. A lack of curiosity and awareness by staff leaves children at risk of accessing unsuitable media content in private areas.

Leaders and managers

The acting manager is new to the role of registered manager. She is child focused, has clear expectations and is open to learning. She is well supported by two team leaders. Staff say that they have had the opportunity of regular supervision and that the team works well together to meet children's needs.

Children benefit from care from a small but stable staff team. During the pandemic, when staffing shortages have arisen, they have been covered by team members or by staff from within the organisation. The use of agency staff is rare. This has helped to give children consistency in their care during a period of uncertainty.

The registered manager has established strong connections with partner agencies. Professionals are unanimously positive about the communication with the staff team and about the care provided for children.

The registered manager has acted to ensure that where the due date has expired, the requirements from the last inspection have been met. For one requirement concerning the qualifications of staff, the due date has not yet lapsed. One member of staff, who has worked in residential care for more than two years, has been enrolled on a relevant level 3 award and expects that this will be completed within the due date.

The independent visitor has continued to monitor the progress and well-being of children since lockdown via virtual visits. However, the usefulness of the visitor's reports is limited due to infrequent feedback from children, an absence of feedback from person's outside of the home and a lack of attempt to view the physical conditions of the home. In addition, the registered manager completed a review of the quality of care. However, this was not sent to Ofsted. These shortfalls reduce the regulator's oversight of the operation of the home.

Staff keep children's plans under review. However, on occasion, recording is not clear, and the language used is not child focused. For example, the registered manager has not made sure that a review date was clear on a consequence record. Shortfalls in maintaining records mean that the child's journey may be misunderstood.

The home is clean and tidy. However, some areas of the home are starting to appear shabby. For example, a handle is loose on a kitchen cupboard and a board is missing from the unit under the cooker. Small holes are evident in the tiles to the kitchen floor. The seat of the sofa in the lounge is becoming worn. This detracts away from children living in a comfortable and homely environment.

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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(b))	09/11/2020
The registered person must ensure that any individual who works in the home in a care role has achieved the appropriate qualification by the relevant date. The relevant date is, in the case of an individual who starts working in a	30/09/2020

care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home. (Regulation 32(5)(a)(b))	
The registered person must supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed. (Regulation 45 (4)(a))	09/11/2020

Recommendations

- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9) This refers specifically to the good maintenance of the kitchen and the timely replacement of worn furniture.
- Registered persons have a key role in seeking to develop the home's effective working relationships with each child's placing authority and with other relevant persons, which may include services, individuals (including parents), agencies, organisations and establishments that work with children in the local community, for example police, schools, health and youth offending teams (regulation 5 – engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met). These working relationships will also be key to success in delivering the care planning standard (regulation 14). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.3)
- Any individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person must make a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home's care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.5)
- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1253711

Registered provider: Beacon Childcare Limited

Registered provider address: Hazlewoods, Windsor House, Bayshill Road,
Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL50 3AT

Responsible individual: Ann-Cheri Callow

Registered managers: Kerry Buckerfield and Lenneah Thomas

Inspector

Alison Cooper, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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