

1229766

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

A private organisation runs this home. Most of the placements are for up to 52 weeks and are long term. The home also provides some short breaks. The organisation has a school and accommodation in the grounds for adults who have learning disabilities and complex needs. The home is registered to provide care for up to 29 children who have complex support and health needs. These needs include profound learning difficulties and/or sensory and/or physical impairments.

The manager has been registered since 5 December 2018.

Visit dates: 9 to 10 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 19 November 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

The managers and staff have implemented effective measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to keep the children safe. The staff have been deployed to work in bubbles. No off-site trips took place and no external visitors were permitted to the home during lockdown. A COVID-19 policy ensures that the staff and the children are kept safe. The children have regular temperature checks and the staff are provided with personal protection equipment, such as masks and aprons, to ensure that good hygiene standards are maintained. The children are considered as a vulnerable group, placing them at increased risk should they contract COVID-19. They have required high-quality care to keep them safe and this has been delivered efficiently by the management and wider staff team.

The staff provided the children with several ways to keep in touch with their families and friends during lockdown. This ensured that the children still benefited from a sense of togetherness even though they were apart from their families.

The staff have been creative with their use of the grounds and the home to keep the children occupied. During the restrictions imposed due to COVID-19, some of the activities that the children enjoyed were spending time in the sensory gardens, using the playground, going on scavenger hunts and playing parachute games. The children have access to specialist resources and aids such as tricycles, bicycles and walking frames. The home has good-quality accessible outdoor play equipment designed to meet the children's needs.

The children received education throughout lockdown, which ensured that their educational needs were met. The staff adapted their practice and brought education to the children's accommodation to reduce movement within the home and school. One parent noted that their child has made progress since joining the home. She said, '[My child] went to mainstream for quite some time and never learned anything. They have been at the home for a short time and have learned so much.' The individualised care provided to the children keeps them safe, promotes their well-being and enables them to build on their understanding.

The safety of children

The monitoring systems implemented by the manager have resulted in increased checks on night staff. Unannounced checks are carried out randomly through the night each month to ensure that children are being safely and properly cared for by the night staff. Safeguarding concerns identified during these checks are followed up and managed effectively. This shows that the managers are aware of areas that require careful monitoring and are responsive to this.

Staff practice concerns identified by the monitoring systems have led to performance management when required. This demonstrates good managerial oversight and leadership.

A new electronic recording format has been introduced to record safeguarding and child protection concerns. Although the system is relatively new, the staff are competent at using it. The system alerts senior managers to the incidents recorded. This enables transparency and better safeguards. The senior staff have better oversight of any concerns that the staff have.

The management team has dealt with several identified practice concerns. Managers have responded to each concern appropriately and made sure that if this presents a risk, the staff do not work with the children until these concerns are investigated. The records of action taken provide a clear account and chronology to show how each concern has been addressed. This has resulted in staff receiving training and performance management and ensures that children are safeguarded effectively.

Social workers and parents are happy with the support provided to the children during lockdown. The staff have adapted to the ever-changing circumstances to ensure that the children are well cared for. The staff work collaboratively with external professionals to support the varied health needs of the children.

Leaders and managers

The manager has met all the requirements that were previously raised. External monitoring has greatly improved. The independent person provides a detailed evaluation of the experiences of the children and the quality of care provided. There is good engagement from management to address any recommendations made.

The supervision provided to staff has improved in frequency. Supervisions are more routinely addressing staff practice issues. The staff said that they feel supervision helps them to improve their working practices.

The staff said that they felt well supported by managers and leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic. The staff said that the managers went above and beyond to ensure that staff were safe and well. This safeguards children as they are supported by a staff team that is fit and able to provide the care and support needed.

The organisation has continued to recruit, and the overall number of staff has increased. This is despite having a number of staff who have left the home. There are staff vacancies. However, a continuous recruitment campaign has generated a steady inflow of new staff and safer, smaller induction groups. Overall, the staffing meets the needs of the children and has improved in consistency.

The registered manager has improved the effectiveness of the internal monitoring and review systems. Therefore, she has a more informed understanding of the strengths of the home and the areas that require development. During a testing

time, the manager has kept children safe and well. She has also led on improvements which, overall, improve the outcomes for children.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1229766

Registered provider: Aurora Care and Education Opco Limited

Registered provider address: Twigworth Court Business Centre, Tewkesbury Road, Gloucester GL2 9PG

Responsible individual: Philip Jonas

Registered manager: Alison Brushett

Inspectors

Lianne Bradford, Social Care Inspector
Deirdra Keating, Social Care Inspector

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