

1224674

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This home provides care and accommodation for up to seven children who have autism spectrum disorder and/or learning disabilities. The home is privately owned and has a school on site.

Visit dates: 2 to 3 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 28 August 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 identified no serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Children are being well cared for. Staff ensured that restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic had no negative impact on children.

Children who have recently moved to the home have settled in well and been well supported. A parent said, 'A lot of effort was put into his transition.'

Staff have warm and nurturing relationships with children. Children have been busy learning skills such as cooking, cleaning and gardening. They take part in lots of fun garden activities such as playing in sandpits and paddling pools, jumping on a trampoline, and using an outdoor gym. An extra vehicle has been purchased to enable staff to take more children out for activities. Children have enjoyed parties, walks, drives out and visits to beaches as lockdown restrictions eased.

Children have maintained good contact with their families, initially by using technology, and, later, as the lockdown restrictions eased, meeting their families in open spaces and the garden.

Children continued to access the on-site school as normal until the summer holidays and have now started back again for a new term. This has meant that children's routines have not been disrupted.

Children have continued to make strong progress. For example, a child who had previously tolerated a very limited range of foods is now starting to develop a more varied diet. The child's parent said: 'I'm thinking about next month bringing a picnic. It was so lovely to witness him pick up a rice cake and put it into his mouth. He didn't eat it but WOW it went in.' This progress has been achieved by ensuring close working relationships with an occupational therapist, a dietician and the child's social worker. Staff have been praised by the social worker for their consistent practice and perseverance.

The safety of children

Appropriate safety precautions have been maintained during the pandemic period. For example, visitors have been limited, staff, children and visitors have their temperature checked throughout the day, and children are encouraged to regularly wash their hands.

Children are safe. Staff have a good understanding of how to keep children safe because they have received regular training.

Behaviour that challenges is managed well. Staff successfully use techniques such as redirection, distraction and planned ignoring. This means that restraint is rarely used. Consequently, each child's behaviour has improved over time.

Safeguarding concerns are appropriately managed.

Leaders and managers

The registered manager is very experienced and appropriately qualified. She is ably supported by her deputy manager. Together, they have demonstrated strong and effective leadership during the pandemic period. They have implemented changes that have improved the lives of children. For example, children now have a sensory room and a snug. Their dining room has moved to a bigger room, enabling them to sit together at mealtimes if they wish to.

All requirements made at the previous inspection have been met. The registered manager has ensured, through good communication and observation of practice, that staff are being more consistent with children. Staff receive regular training in safeguarding children and demonstrate a good knowledge of how to keep children safe.

A strong recruitment drive has meant that the home has used fewer agency workers. This has resulted in greater consistency of care.

Effective external monitoring has continued throughout the pandemic period, although this was mostly done virtually. The independent visitor has now resumed on-site visits.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1224674

Registered provider: Hopscotch Solutions Limited

Registered provider address: 1 Merchant Place, River Street, Bolton BL2 1BX

Responsible individual: Katie Harrison

Registered manager: Amy Merchant

Inspector

Joanne Vyas, Social Care Inspector

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