

1272657

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

A private organisation runs this children's home. It is registered to provide care for up to four children whose primary needs are due to a learning disability.

The registered manager has been registered since April 2020.

Visit dates: 14 to 15 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 30 October 2019

Previous inspection judgement: Requires improvement

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

The children benefit from a staff team that provides consistent boundaries that enable them to enjoy positive routines. All the children attend education. During the lockdown period, the staff provided home education along with stimulating and creative activities, such as gardening, baking and dancing.

The staff devise ways to regularly seek the children's wishes and feelings. The staff use pictorial consultation forms and activity walls to support children who are unable to verbalise their views. These communication aids enable the children to choose activities and express their preferences.

The staff take pride in their comprehensive knowledge of the children's needs and diagnoses. They know the children very well. This was confirmed in the feedback from parents and social workers. Parents said that their children's progress in social skills, independence and communication is evident. These skills enable children to express themselves and prepare them for more independent lives.

The staff do not always update the records. The manager has tried to resolve these shortfalls by using handover meetings, but these are not always linked to the child's relevant records.

The children's bedrooms are individualised, and some communal areas have recently been decorated. The manager has been proactive in decorating parts of the house to ensure that the children's personal space embraces their interests and diverse needs. The maintenance schedule has been delayed significantly by the lockdown restrictions and the consequent pressures on the staff team. As a result, numerous areas require small maintenance repairs, such as replacing bathroom tiles, sealants and the fitting of new fire doors. Some parts of the home look unkempt. In addition, areas including the corridors, the conservatory, the quadrant garden and windows are not clean.

The safety of children

The staff provide high levels of supervision due to the children's specific vulnerabilities. There are very few incidents. This reflects a stable home environment.

The staff understand how to manage risks and keep the children safe. They understand the effects of the children being confined to the home during lockdown. The staff provide safe environments and use distraction techniques and activities that de-escalate challenging behaviours. These strategies have reduced the use of physical restraints.

The core staff communicate effectively with each other. They share information and have built a strong team work ethic that helps them to provide consistent and stable care for the children.

The manager has developed new ways of recording restraints to capture children's views and provide better managerial oversight. These new systems have yet to be fully embedded in practice. Therefore, as the staff get used to new systems, detailed records of all the restraints have not yet been uniformly achieved. Not all themes and trends have been fully considered and, consequently, are not always reflected in the children's safety plans and wider risk assessments.

Leaders and managers

The manager has taken some steps to address the shortfalls identified at the last inspection. However, some of these shortfalls remain, and two previous requirements have been raised again. The manager has prioritised the children's immediate needs. He has provided shift cover during the COVID-19 restrictions. This has limited his availability to address all aspects of the recovery plan following the last inspection.

The manager is working well and has improved staff morale. The staff team shows a strong commitment to the children. Three agency staff are used regularly, and this consistency enables them to build relationships and trust with the children. The checking system for agency staff profiles has improved, despite long delays in agencies providing the required information. The management team chases this information to ensure that safe recruitment procedures are followed.

The staff continue to access training and have recently undertaken restraint and behaviour management training in line with previous recommendations.

The manager has failed to ensure the regular supervision of staff. There are long gaps between supervisions, and one new staff member has only had one supervision in three months. The failure to provide supervision means that the staff may be unsupported in their roles.

The staff provide weekly health and safety checks. However, they have failed to identify that two fire doors do not close properly. Although the fire service has visited the home recently and provided a satisfactory report, good fire prevention measures depend on the vigilance of the staff checks.

The recording and monitoring systems require improvement. The organisation of where information is held and recorded does not always link to the children's care plans. This means that some of the children's records are not responsive to all their changing needs.

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>If the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005(a) applies to the home—</p> <p>the registered person must ensure that the requirements of that Order and any regulations made under it, except for article 23 (duties of employees), are complied with in respect of the home. (Regulation 25(2)(b))</p>	30/10/2020
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33(4)(b))</p>	30/10/2020

Recommendations

- Provide a nurturing environment that is welcoming. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
In particular, ensure that the home is clean and maintained well throughout.
- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14)
In particular, ensure that the children's records are regularly reviewed and updated in response to any changes in their care.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1272657

Registered provider: Inroads Essex Limited

Registered provider address: Suffolk House 7 Hydra, Orion Court, Addison Way,
Great Blakenham, Suffolk IP6 0LW

Responsible individual: Vivienne Norton

Registered manager: Grzegorz Szeliga

Inspectors

Deirdra Keating, Social Care Inspector
Leemya McKeown, Social Care Inspector

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