

1241975

# Assurance visit

## Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a large private provider. It is registered to provide help and support for four children who struggle to manage their emotions and behaviour. There are currently four children living in the home.

The registered manager is experienced in the sector, has relevant qualifications and has been registered at this home since June 2020.

**Visit dates:** 7 to 8 October 2020

**Previous inspection date:** 22 August 2018

**Previous inspection judgement:** 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**

Children are cared for by a committed staff team. Despite the challenges that children may present, staff maintain this commitment and develop trusting relationships with them. During the period of social restriction due to COVID-19, all the children had to isolate for two weeks. Staff worked hard to make sure this time was as positive as it could be, and consistent care continued.

Staff support children with focused individual sessions. The work to help children understand the internet and safety issues is comprehensive. After bullying incidents, staff work with children to address these and to help children better understand how to be friends. Children are also helped to truly consider their ethnic and cultural heritage by staff who are committed to equality. The conversations are managed at a level that children can understand and so this is a true learning experience for them.

During the period of social restriction, children have been encouraged to carry on with their interests. Staff have put in place creative activities such as making flower beds out of tyres in the garden, which are delightful. Children enjoy playing together but this sometimes doesn't work out well. Staff do not always predict these incidents, which leaves children vulnerable.

Children continued with their education during lockdown. Staff supported them to go to school, where they were able to attend, and for those children who were not able to attend school staff took on responsibility for this in the home. Using creative measures and a playful, empathic approach, children have been able to develop their learning.

Staff work hard to make the home environment pleasant but there has been a succession of times when damage has happened. This means that the environment is not as homely as children deserve, and staff would like, but maintenance issues are addressed as quickly as they can be.

### **The safety of children**

Staff do not make sure that all known risks are clearly assessed. There is also inconsistency between therapeutic plans and risk assessments about how worrying some difficulties are for children. Thankfully, staff know the children and their risks well, but without cohesive guidance staff do not have an accurate reference for their approach and this is confusing.

Children are not always kind to each other and there are times when they hurt each other. Staff intervene quickly when this happens but there could be better prediction of these incidents from the knowledge staff have of children and their individual

support needs. Staff undertake work around friendships and sharing spaces in the house, but this is not yet having the effect staff are aiming for.

Staff physically intervene with children where they need to. They work hard afterwards to enable children to repair relationships, which helps children feel accepted. The conversations afterwards are not always with someone independent of the incident, which may leave children vulnerable should they be unhappy about what has happened. However, in some instances the registered manager follows this up with children and this oversight adds a layer of protection to children and staff.

Complaints are taken seriously by the manager of the home. Records of these complaints are not clearly collated and so are not accessible. This means that it is unclear whether children have a response to their worries and they cannot always remember if they have.

Children who leave the home without permission are supported by staff to safely return. They are welcomed back warmly by staff, who try to get to the root of any problems, so children can get on with their days. This warm practice exemplifies the restorative approach staff try to use with children day-to-day.

## **Leaders and managers**

This home is led by a knowledgeable and experienced manager who is committed to developing the skills and knowledge of others. Staff are supported through supervision and have clear actions and targets set by the manager to ensure their progress. Where the manager leads incident debriefs these are reflective and share learning. This helps staff to develop their practice.

Staff in the home, and particularly the registered manager, have excellent relationships with schools. There have been occasions when the passion staff have for children and their rights has been poorly expressed with some professionals. The registered manager is open to this feedback and takes appropriate action with staff that helps them to learn but does not dampen their commitment or passion.

Staff use training to help their development. After an incident where a child made a racist comment, the manager and staff responded by updating their training around racism, so they could best help the children. The registered manager leads the team to understand children's individual context and experience, so their responses are likewise individual and contextual.

Where staff have not completed relevant qualifications as expected, the manager makes rational decisions about extending the timescale for completion. In this way, the registered manager can be both supportive and hold staff to account.

The manager makes sure that she has appropriate checks for new starters and agency staff when they work in the home. This means that children are supported by staff who are safe to work with them.

Recommendations from the last inspection have all been met.

## 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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child;</p> <p>manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other.</p> <p>(Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(iv))</p>	19/11/2020
<p>The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation.</p> <p>(Regulation 39 (3))</p>	19/11/2020

## Children's home details

**Unique reference number:** 1241975

**Registered provider:** Horizon Care and Education Group Limited

**Registered provider address:** Horizon Care and Education Group Limited,  
Venture House, Unit 12, Prospect Business Park, Longford Road, Cannock,  
Staffordshire WS11 0LG

**Responsible individual:** Denise Knowles

**Registered manager:** Natalie Allen

## Inspector

Karol Keenan, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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