

1236278

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This children's home provides care for up to three children. This home is part of a large, national organisation.

The manager registered with Ofsted on 29 May 2020. There is currently one child living in the home.

Visit dates: 19 to 20 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 29 November 2018

Previous inspection judgement: Inadequate

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 manager and staff's feelings of warmth and enthusiasm for the child in this home shine through in all aspects of the care that they provide. Relationships between staff and the child are trusting and positive. The manager and staff also support the child to develop these types of relationships with significant others outside of the home.

The child's move into the home four weeks ago has been successful. A series of planned and personalised introductions, organised flexibly in accordance with the child's needs, meant that every staff member travelled to see the child in his previous home. In doing so, they got to know him and what is important to him. This careful planning enabled the child to feel very prepared for his move and a new set of routines. Consequently, he has responded extremely positively to these expectations. Of significance, having been out of school for two years and spending much of this time isolated from others, the child is now attending school enthusiastically and full time, eating and sleeping well and enjoying a variety of activities.

Staff know which areas to prioritise in helping the child achieve, socially, emotionally and educationally. Supporting documentation provides guidance regarding this, as well as regular team meetings where staff discuss the child's needs and a consistent response to these needs.

The headteacher, social worker and family praise the home unreservedly and are delighted with the progress the child has made since he moved in. Family members are welcomed to the home and supported to see their child. Communication, through regular progress reports and updates via email or telephone, with family and professionals alike is good.

Staff have made great efforts to help the child feel confident about expressing his feelings and support him to do this in different ways. As a result of this encouragement, the child has responded by making suggestions about his care and the home environment.

The safety of children

The child's response to the care given to him indicates that he feels very safe in the home. He said that he has slept well from the first night, that the staff look after him well and he feels happy.

The manager and team talk knowledgeably about the child and his needs. They have received relevant training and follow guidance to defuse any potential incidents. Boundaries are in place and some resistance to these has naturally occurred, which is discussed and managed. There have not been any serious incidents or a need for physical intervention. However, if a concern arises, this is well recorded by staff, the incident is reviewed by the manager and conversations are had with the child to

repair any hurt feelings. The manager recognises underlying triggers and takes swift action to resolve problems that could have an impact on the child.

Staff have actively encouraged the child to write down or speak about any grumbles or expectations he does not agree with. These are then dealt with by staff and the manager.

Leaders and managers

The manager has worked hard to create a nurturing ethos and a welcoming home for the child. She makes clear her expectations of staff, who feel well supported by their manager and are united in their desire for the child to reach his potential. The manager is organised and plans ahead, to ensure that the child's needs are met.

COVID-19 and the associated restrictions have presented challenges to the running of the home, but the manager has taken positives from this time, such as the team completing extra training, and she feels that they have managed well.

The home environment is well maintained, clean and tidy. The office and utility room are less homely and detract from an otherwise welcoming environment. Window restrictors in the child's bedroom are in place without a personalised risk assessment, so the manager now plans to review this decision. The home's internet is not always reliable, which has an impact on the child, so the manager is investigating ways to improve this.

The manager and team work closely with other professionals and family members to meet the child's needs in the best way they can and are proud of the child's progress and achievements.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

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. Children's homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene etc.); however, in doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9) In particular, review the need for window restrictors in the child's bedroom and seek to make all areas in the home as homely as possible.
- Children's homes staff should seek to identify and provide appropriate opportunities for children to develop themselves in accordance with their wishes and feelings. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the

quality standards', page 31, paragraph 6.4) In particular, consider all available options to improve the quality of the Wi-Fi so it is fit for purpose.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1236278

Registered provider: Priory Education Services Limited

Registered provider address: Priory Group, 80 Hammersmith Road, London W14 8UD

Responsible individual: Nancy O'Regan

Registered manager: Hannah-Marie Bennetts

Inspector

Sarah Canto, Social Care Inspector

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