

SC039900

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a local authority. It is registered for up to seven young people who have learning and physical disabilities.

The manager is suitably qualified and experienced and has been registered with Ofsted since April 2009.

Visit dates: 3 to 4 November 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

Children and young people are happy living in the home. Staff understand children and young people's needs well. This contributes to the positive relationships children and young people have with staff.

Staff help children and young people understand how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on children and young people's lives. For example, staff help them understand why activities are being cancelled and plans for some young people to transition back to the family home are being delayed. Because children and young people understand the pandemic, they have coped well with the restrictions and delays.

Staff help children and young people to remain in regular contact with their family and people who are important to them. Children and young people have regular phone calls and video calls with their family when face-to-face visits are not possible. When the restrictions have eased, staff have arranged for children and young people to see their family in line with the government guidelines.

During lockdown, staff have entertained children and young people with board games, quizzes and by going on local walks in the community. Children and young people have enjoyed being in the home.

Staff promote children and young people's education. This continued when children and young people were not able to attend education because of the pandemic. Staff used online educational resources, maintained daily routines and developed the children and young people's independence skills in the home.

Staff ensure that children and young people's health needs are met. Telephone consultations have taken place when face-to-face appointments have not been possible.

Staff have responded well to the COVID-19 pandemic. Measures have been implemented to reduce risks, and staff respond appropriately if there are concerns relating to COVID-19 and seek appropriate guidance if needed.

The registered manager and staff have decorated the home well to ensure that the home has a less institutional feel, particularly downstairs. However, some repairs are needed. For example, one of the bathroom doors upstairs needs fixing.

The safety of children

Children and young people have remained settled during the pandemic and have enjoyed spending time in the home.

Staff understand children and young people's risks and behaviours and work hard to keep them safe. Behaviour management plans and risk assessments are reflective of the children's needs. Children and young people feel safe living in the home.

Children and young people do not go missing from the home.

Staff training has been affected because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Most staff have not completed behaviour management refresher training. The registered manager has not considered any interim measures while waiting for a new date for training to be arranged. The impact is currently minimal because children and young people are settled, and staff do not need to physically restrain children or young people to manage their behaviour.

No new staff have started working at the home since the last inspection. The registered manager has revised and rectified the shortfalls identified at the last inspection relating to recruitment. The registered manager and deputy manager are still waiting to have safer recruitment training. This was cancelled due to the pandemic. Online training has now been identified.

Staff have not had some basic training, such as recognising child criminal exploitation, understanding the 'Prevent' duty and understanding attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. This limits staff knowledge and understanding of such issues, which may affect children and young people.

Leaders and managers

A registered manager is in post. Staff feel supported by the registered manager and told the inspector that they could go to him at any time to discuss any worries or concerns they may have.

The registered manager and staff have positive relationships with professionals. Social workers speak highly about the care that children and young people receive. They also said that the registered manager and staff communicate effectively with them about children's progress.

A long-standing staff team enjoys working at the home. Staff provide consistent care to the children and young people, which promotes children and young people's welfare.

Staff have regular monthly supervision and find this beneficial. Not all staff who supervise staff have had supervision training. This is important to ensure that staff are being supervised by an appropriate and skilled senior member of staff.

The registered manager has a review system in place that he completes monthly to monitor the home. The monthly visits from the independent visitor have been sporadic during the COVID-19 pandemic, and reports have not always been sent to Ofsted. This does not support the manager's monitoring of the home. An external company has since been employed to undertake the monthly independent visits.

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 registered person must—</p> <p>keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and</p> <p>notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (3)(a)(b))</p>	11/12/2020
<p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13(1)(a)(b)(2)(c))</p>	11/12/2020
<p>The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person's report to—</p> <p>HMCI. (Regulation 44 (1)(7)(a))</p>	11/12/2020

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)
- The registered person must have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and

experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. Professionally qualified staff employed by the home, e.g. teachers or social workers, should be provided with relevant professional or clinical supervision by an appropriately qualified and experienced professional. (Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards, page 61, paragraph 13.2)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC039900

Registered provider: Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

Registered provider address: Council House, Priory Road, Dudley DY1 1HF

Responsible individual: Wendi Grizzle

Registered manager: Mark Bates

Inspector

Lisa O'Donovan, Social Care Inspector

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