

1234243

# Assurance visit

## Information about this children's home

This three-bedded children's home aims to provide children with a warm, homely and non-institutionalised environment. The manager registered with Ofsted in December 2018 and is currently undertaking the required level 5 qualification.

**Visit dates:** 8 to 9 December 2020

**Previous inspection date:** 11 December 2019

**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**

All children attend school. Staff work with schools to ensure that children have regular attendance. During the pandemic, staff supported the children with online work provided by the schools. Some children struggled to return to school on a full-time basis in September, when new ways of working came into place due to the pandemic. Since September, some children have been, and still are, on a part-time timetable. This should have been escalated to the virtual school and the local special educational needs team.

Staff support children to attend all health appointments. Not all routine appointments were attended during the pandemic, but staff have started to rearrange these. Staff identified that a child has an unmet health need. Although a referral has been made to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, specialist health advice should be sought in the meantime.

Children take part in a range of appropriate activities, such as football training and cinema outings. However, the pandemic has limited the opportunities for some of these. Given the lack of community activities, access to the internet has become increasingly important to the children. The children's Wi-Fi has not been working for 10 days. The manager has escalated this, but, at the time of the visit, it was still to be resolved.

Significant repair work, due to subsidence, has recently been carried out on the house. The work was delayed due to the pandemic. The work affected nearly every room and the house is being redecorated. The recommendation set at the previous inspection is carried over.

## **The safety of children**

Physical interventions are only used as a last resort, to keep children safe. Staff have received additional restraint training to meet the individual needs of children. Clear guidance on the holds, including photographs, has been provided. Behaviour support plans have been updated to include this guidance.

The manager reviews all incidents. A chronology of incidents helps staff to identify when children's needs change or escalate. This information is used to inform and update the behaviour support plans. In addition, the clinical team oversees the behaviour support plans and offers support to the staff team following any incidents. The clinical team carries out assessments to develop strategies that the staff can use to support the children.

Staff know how to report concerns. There has been an isolated incident of potential poor staff practice. Safeguarding procedures were followed appropriately. The designated safeguarding officer was notified, as well as appropriate safeguarding practitioners. A thorough investigation was carried out.

There are written protocols to manage allegations made by children. These were drawn up following consultation with social workers and the designated safeguarding officer. The use of these protocols will help to keep children and staff safe.

Some risks and behaviours displayed by children were not identified at the time of admission due to lack of information. Staff have sought additional information from a range of other stakeholders to ensure that they have a full understanding of children's needs. Risk assessments have been updated in light of the new information.

## Leaders and managers

The registered manager has formed positive working relationships with key agencies. Other professionals are invited into the home to meet with staff and children. One professional said, 'We work together as a team.'

Communication with other professionals is very good; one described it as 'brilliant'. Staff keep schools up to date with how children are on a daily basis. This means that the school can prepare for the children and ensure that the children get the best start to their school day.

Incident recording is, in the most part, thorough. However, staff generally do not record what actions they have taken to prevent or de-escalate the situation. Poor recording means that it is difficult for the manager and others to evaluate the quality of staff practice.

There is a good range of internal quality-assurance processes. Recently, all of these have highlighted that managerial oversight has been lacking when the manager has been on leave.

Three of the four recommendations set at the last inspection in December 2019 have been met. The fourth recommendation, regarding the environment, has been carried over. Three requirements have been made following this visit.

## 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
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—	24 December 2020

<p>understand the children’s home’s overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;</p> <p>use this understanding to deliver care that meets children’s needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to—</p> <p>meet the needs of each child; and</p> <p>enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home.</p> <p>(Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(i)(ii))</p> <p>This particularly refers to ensuring that children have access to Wi-Fi at the home.</p>	
<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>understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home.</p> <p>(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(f))</p> <p>This particularly refers to ensuring that there is continuity of management oversight in the absence of the registered manager.</p>	<p>1 February 2021</p>
<p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes—</p>	<p>1 February 2021</p>

details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure.

(Regulation 35 (3)(a)(v))

## Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the home is maintained and decorated to a good standard. ('Guide to Children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, 3.9)
- The registered person should act as an effective advocate to ensure children have access to full-time education, as a good parent would do. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 28, 5.12)
- The registered person should seek specific health advice to meet a child's newly identified health concern. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 34, paragraph 7.10)

## Children's home details

**Unique reference number:** 1234243

**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:** Emma Carrington

**Registered manager:** Daniel Wheatstone

## Inspector

Alison Marshall, Social Care Inspector

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