

1226978

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

A private company owns and operates this children's home. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two children and/or young people who may have emotional, social or mental health difficulties.

The home has not had a registered manager since April 2020. A manager has been appointed recently but is not yet registered.

Visit dates: 15 to 16 December 2020

Previous inspection date: 3 September 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

Children are looked after by members of staff who care about them a great deal. One child has lived in the home for many years and views this home as his home. Children trust that members of staff want the best for them. As a result, children respond well to the care they receive and make good progress.

Children move into the home after a full assessment of their needs. Consideration is given to the potential impact they may have on children already living in the home. Staffing requirements are adjusted, as necessary. This approach is successful. Children are learning to live alongside each other. This is evidence of significant progress.

Children keep in touch with their families. Members of staff provide transport for children so that regular visits can take place. One parent expressed their gratitude for this support. Because of efforts such as these, children maintain their relationships with members of their family. This supports their sense of identity and helps with long-term care planning.

The emotional well-being of children is supported by a psychologist who works with the home. She offers consultation to the staff team, to help improve their understanding of the children's needs. Members of staff become more effective in their responses to the children because of this input.

The educational needs of children are not being fully met. Professionals have differences of opinion about the best approach to support the children's learning. The manager intends to have a meeting to consider these difficulties. It is too soon to know if this will have a positive impact on the children.

Children are living in a home that needs decorating. The home looks somewhat drab and, in places, careworn. This does not give children a sense that they are valued. The provider has highlighted that this work is required. Plans are in place to make the necessary improvements.

Members of staff work hard to ensure the welfare of children during the COVID-19 pandemic. Children understand the limitations on their activities and follow expectations. They enjoy a range of pastimes in the home, including playing musical instruments. Because of the approach of the staff team, children have been occupied and have remained healthy throughout this period.

The safety of children

Children do not go missing from the home, they are not involved with substance misuse and they are not being exploited. Members of staff use their positive relationships with children to talk to them about these and other risks. Children are growing up safely because they trust and respond well to their carers.

Members of staff develop individualised risk management plans. These plans identify strategies to prevent children from coming to harm. Members of staff have a shared understanding about how they must respond to the children. This means that the approach of the staff team is consistent, which helps to keep children safe.

Members of staff understand the impact of trauma on children. The staff team uses this knowledge to inform how they manage behaviours. Boundaries are realistic, and consequences make sense to the children. Children are learning to reflect on their difficulties, which helps them to manage their own behaviour. This is an indication of progress.

Children can enjoy some activities that have an element of risk. For example, one child likes to swim in the sea. Members of staff set out potential dangers. They talk to the child about their expectations. The child responds well to this approach and, as a result, is able to enjoy this pastime without coming to harm.

Leaders and managers

The provider has successfully recruited new residential care staff. Low staffing levels had been an issue in this home for a long time. Members of staff told the inspector that the current position is much better. Children are now being looked after by a stable staff team.

Managers undertake regular monitoring of the home. Areas for improvement are clearly set out. Managers respond to external monitoring and value this input. The new manager is becoming familiar with these processes in the home. It is too soon to know the effectiveness of his oversight.

Members of staff receive regular supervision of their practice. New members of staff undergo a detailed induction to the home and have frequent meetings with their supervisor. Children are looked after by members of staff who become familiar with reflecting on their performance. This means their practice becomes more effective and emerging issues are addressed.

Members of staff undertake regular training to improve their knowledge and skills. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, training is being completed remotely. Despite these restrictions, members of staff continue to receive guidance to equip them to care for children.

Two members of staff have not completed the required qualification within timescales. Although the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has added to the difficulties for staff in completing this qualification, there has been insufficient oversight and management of the issue.

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>For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained—</p> <p>the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or</p> <p>a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma.</p> <p>The relevant date is—</p> <p>in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home. (Regulation 32 (4)(a)(b)(5)(a))</p>	31/01/2021

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. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9) In particular, the home should be decorated and maintained to a good standard.
- Homes must ensure that there are effective relationships with school and support services so that the educational needs of children are consistently prioritised. Processes should be arranged to deal with barriers to engagement within the wider system. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 27, paragraph 5.7)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1226978

Registered provider: Cambian Childcare Ltd

Registered provider address: Caretech Ltd, Metropolitan House, 3 Darkes Lane, Potters Bar EN6 1AG

Responsible individual: Susan Fitzsimmons

Registered manager: post vacant

Inspector

Jane Titley, Social Care Inspector

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