

1249184

Registered provider: Horizon Care and Education Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is one of a group of homes operated by the same organisation. It provides care and accommodation for up to three children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Since the last inspection, a manager has been registered at the home but has recently left. There is an interim manager in post.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 22 September 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on our website.

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 June 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **inadequate**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **inadequate**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded.

Date of last inspection: 18 February 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: declined in effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

Compliance notices under regulations 12 and 13 were issued following the interim inspection in February 2020. These were considered to be met at a monitoring visit on 22 April 2020.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/02/2020	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
18/06/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
11/03/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
25/04/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Managers have not ensured that there are enough staff to get children to school on time. This means that staff members are expected to support children to two different schools at the same time. As a result, one child is regularly late for class and is unable to start the day with their friends.

Children have varying experiences of direct-work sessions with the staff. Staff use some helpful workbooks which support children to understand their emotions. In contrast, there are direct-work sessions which appear blaming and insensitive. Staff have also failed to address events in children's pasts and consider their current risks. Staff have sought the support of the in-house clinical team but have not found this helpful in their work. This means that staff are unable to support children effectively to make sense of their past and how this might link to their current worries to help them to progress.

Children do not live in a well-maintained and homely environment. For example, children's bathrooms are dirty, and some staff give children too much responsibility for their upkeep. Furthermore, managers do not address maintenance issues quickly. As a result, children do not live in a home that they deserve.

Children have made progress despite other significant shortfalls. For example, they attend school and make progress there. Professionals who work with the children are complimentary about the home and some staff's knowledge of children.

Staff have found creative ways for children to communicate their mood to staff. For example, staff have provided a colour-changing light so that one child can tell staff how he feels. Staff are tracking this information so that, over time, they will be able to respond better to that child. This is personalised practice that the child has been central to creating.

Children have good relationships with staff. They can go to them for support and they believe staff will respond well to them. One parent told inspectors that her child's key worker helped their child to make 'massive changes'. Staff also advocate for children in their care. Although this is not always effective, it does make it clear to children that staff will act in their best interests with their networks.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: inadequate

Managers do not address allegations made during incidents. They do not investigate them or follow their own policy. In addition, staff who see incorrect records or poor practice do not challenge these with managers. This indicates that staff do not understand their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding. They do not whistle-blow effectively and managers cannot be assured that children receive safe care.

Staff do not always help children to understand incidents and their behaviour in a thoughtful way. This is not in line with the underpinning approach of the home that relies on curiosity, acceptance and empathy. Children are sometimes given information about the consequences to their behaviour that does not match their age and understanding. Staff records of these conversations indicate that children should feel ashamed. This is not an effective way to help children to develop.

Staff physically intervene with children inconsistently and managers rarely challenge staff members' statements. Staff's decision-making about whether to physically intervene is unclear. At times, physical intervention has not been used as a 'last resort' as it should be. This indicates that staff have used physical intervention to enforce their will, which is poor practice. In addition to these concerns, staff who are not trained to intervene have restrained children when others could have taken the lead. This is also poor practice. As a result, managers cannot be assured of staff's decision-making at key times and children are not having their rights upheld.

Staff have not acted to address children's risk-taking behaviours, such as their use of alcohol and drugs. Direct-work sessions about these subjects are minimal. Inspectors discovered drug paraphernalia in a child's bedroom while at the home. Staff and managers were unaware that this was there. This indicates a lack of checks for children where drugs misuse is a known concern. This also results in other children being at risk of harm.

Staff have not made sure that risk assessments are in place for all known concerns. For example, staff did not assess the risk to one child after they self-harmed, nor did they assess risk when a child informed them that they have previously set fires. This means that staff do not have the necessary guidance to help them keep children safe.

Managers are not aware of the actions in the fire risk assessment and whether they are complete or not. In addition, actions noted as high risk relating to carbon monoxide checks are not being completed in line with the fire risk assessment or company policy. This has left children and staff at potential risk of harm and also indicates a lack of management oversight of health and safety.

Managers do not follow safe recruitment principles. They have failed to verify all checks or gaps in employment history. Paperwork is also incomplete, which means that decisions made about specific issues or concerns are not always clear. Consequently, managers cannot be assured about the suitability of staff in the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Managers' monitoring is inadequate. Inspectors found several examples of missing details, poor, unchallenged records, and managers submitting monthly audits late, or not at all. Managers fail to oversee incidents and records comprehensively. This means that staff are not challenged when their approach falls short of good practice.

Managers appear too quick to believe staff's version of events about incidents without verifying them. This means that children are unheard and are potentially not safeguarded.

Children's internal plans are variable, and, in some areas, they are not up to date. Managers' oversight lacks clarity and they have not ensured that staff have signed these plans when they have read them. This means that staff are not working with the most up-to-date information.

Staff's supervision is not recorded effectively and is not regular. Supervision records lack detail and indicate a lack of focus on the children's experience, needs and plans. Managers and supervisors do not challenge staff practice and, therefore, do not monitor professional development. This further shows the lack of management oversight and challenge to staff practice.

Staff are not all up to date with mandatory training. Additionally, not all staff have completed the required qualification within the necessary timescale. Managers have not planned ahead to avoid this situation. This means that children will not always receive the necessary response from trained and qualified adults who are there to support them.

Managers have not ensured that there is regular communication with children's schools. A child had a difficult incident where staff had to restrain them due to poor communication about a lesson. This incident was avoidable. For another child, after they left school, staff completed very little direct work with them to develop their independence skills. This is a missed opportunity to support children in preparation for adulthood.

Managers do not always notify the regulator when serious incidents happen. Although staff usually take appropriate action to support children and talk with key partners, this is not always the case and is not always timely. This hinders the regulator's and key partner's oversight of the care provided at the home.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <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>understand and apply the home's statement of purpose;</p> <p>ensure that staff—</p> <p>understand and apply the home's statement of purpose;</p> <p>treat each child with dignity and respect. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(i)(iii))</p> <p>In particular, staff must understand the underpinning ethos and approach of the home to apply to practice and to record-keeping.</p>	9 August 2021
<p>The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <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>understand and apply the home's statement of purpose;</p>	9 August 2021

<p>ensure that staff—</p> <p>provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably;</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. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(vii)(c)(i))</p> <p>In particular, the home must be clean, and maintenance issues must be addressed in a timely way.</p>	
<p>The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment;</p> <p>maintain regular contact with each child’s education and training provider, including engaging with the provider and the placing authority to support the child’s education and training and to maximise the child’s achievement;</p> <p>help each child who is above compulsory school age to participate in further education, training or employment and to prepare for future care, education or employment;</p> <p>help each child to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child’s relevant plans. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(iv)(vi)(ix)(x))</p> <p>In particular, the manager must ensure that arrangements are in place for children to arrive at school on time. The manager must also develop and maintain relationships with schools so that any concerns at school are shared with the home in a timely way. In addition, should children be out of school for any reason, they must be provided with relevant activities, either educational or to develop their daily living skills.</p>	<p>9 August 2021</p>

<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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i))</p> <p>Managers must ensure that when new risks arise for children and others, these are assessed and guidance is provided.</p> <p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</p>	<p>9 August 2021</p>
<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>help each child understand how to keep safe. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(ii))</p> <p>Managers must ensure that staff help children to understand and, where necessary, work to change negative behaviours, such as the use of alcohol and drugs.</p>	<p>9 August 2021</p>
<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>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p>	<p>9 August 2021</p>

<p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and</p> <p>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(v)(vi)(vii))</p> <p>In particular, staff must understand their roles in relation to safeguarding and challenging others around practice relating to allegations. The management of the organisation must also be assured that staff understand and will use the whistle-blowing procedures to raise concerns if needed.</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>lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose;</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c))</p> <p>The manager must ensure that staff use the underpinning approach of the home outlined in the statement of purpose and this must be reflected in their records about children's care. In addition, the manager must ensure that staff, permanent and temporary, have the training, qualifications and skills for their role.</p> <p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</p>	<p>9 August 2021</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>9 August 2021</p>

<p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child;</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(d)(h))</p> <p>Managers must ensure that their monitoring and review systems are effective in challenging staff practice as needed, ensure that staff and managers adhere to safeguarding policies and procedures, and improve the quality of care children receive. In addition, managers must ensure that there are sufficient staff to take children to school and meet their daily needs.</p> <p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</p>	
<p>The care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a))</p> <p>Children's plans in the home must be kept up to date and should enable managers to understand progress for children.</p> <p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</p>	9 August 2021
<p>Restraint in relation to a child must be necessary and proportionate. (Regulation 20 (2))</p> <p>In particular, staff must ensure that physical intervention is a 'last resort', as noted in the organisational policy.</p>	9 August 2021
<p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.</p> <p>The registered person may only—</p> <p>employ an individual to work at the children's home; or</p>	9 August 2021

<p>if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home,</p> <p>if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3).</p> <p>The requirements are that—</p> <p>the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform.</p> <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 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(b) (4)(a)(b) (5)(a))</p> <p>Staff must be suitably qualified within the required timescale and managers must inform staff of this timescale.</p>	
<p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.</p> <p>The registered person may only—</p> <p>employ an individual to work at the children's home; or</p> <p>if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home,</p> <p>if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3).</p>	<p>9 August 2021</p>

<p>The requirements are that—</p> <p>full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(d))</p> <p>Managers must ensure that they verify all checks and gaps in employment when recruiting staff.</p>	
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b))</p>	<p>9 August 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>a description of the measure and its duration;</p> <p>details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure;</p> <p>the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure.</p> <p>within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")—</p> <p>has spoken to the user about the measure; and</p> <p>has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and</p> <p>within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(iv)(v)(vii)(b)(i)(ii)(c))</p> <p>Physical intervention records must be complete, and staff must reflect on their own role and children's contexts in any incidents to aid learning from them.</p>	<p>9 August 2021</p>

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all staff have been adequately trained in the principles of restraint and any restraint techniques appropriate to the needs of the children the home is set up to care for as defined in the home's statement of purpose. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.57)
- The registered person should ensure that a record of supervision is kept for staff, including the manager. The record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with regulation 33 (4)(b). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)
- The registered person should have a system in place so that all serious events are notified, within 24 hours, to the appropriate people. The system should cover the action that should be followed if the event arises at the weekend or on a public holiday. Notification should include details of the action taken by the home's staff in response. ('Guide to children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.3)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child should always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person should ensure that staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. This includes ensuring that the home's fire risk assessment is reviewed and that identified actions are remedied. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1249184

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Horizon Care and Education Group Limited

Registered provider address: Venture House, Unit 12 Prospect Business Park,
Longford Road, Cannock WS11 0LG

Responsible individual: Denise Knowles

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Karol Keenan, Social Care Inspector (lead)
Melanie Griffin, Social Care Inspector

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