

# 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 a large private provider. It provides care for up to three children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

An interim manager has been in day-to-day charge of the home since April 2021 but has not submitted her application to register.

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 12 August 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

### Inspection dates: 28 and 29 September 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:** 9 June 2021

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** inadequate

### Enforcement action since last inspection:

A notice restricting the accommodation at the home and two compliance notices, under regulations 12 (the protection of children standard) and 13 (the leadership

and management standard), were issued following the last full inspection. The compliance notices were not met at the monitoring visit on 12 August 2021 and an additional compliance notice, under regulation 13, was also issued. The notice restricting accommodation was reissued on 3 September 2021.

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/06/2021	Full	Inadequate
18/02/2020	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
18/06/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
11/03/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate**

Two children currently live in the home. Children's progress is hindered by shortfalls in safeguarding practice and leadership and management. The three compliance notices issued at the last inspection were not met and have been reissued. The restriction of the accommodation of the home remains in place.

Children have mixed day-to-day experiences. Managers have not been able to recruit new staff. This means that there are not enough permanent, well-known staff to meet the needs of the number of children the home is registered for. One child said they feel like they often miss out on time with staff they know well and receive support from staff they know and like less. This leads to feelings of resentment among children.

Staff carry out key-working sessions with children which focus on relevant areas of their statutory and internal care plans. Staff records of these sessions remain inconsistent. Some records show the care and nurture staff offer to children. However, too many records still do not evidence the provider's underpinning therapeutic approach. When children find these sessions hard, staff do not routinely explore their comments to seek understanding. In addition, there are times when staff give children negative feedback and miss the opportunity to explore children's thoughts and feelings. As a result, key-working sessions do not always help children with their development.

Despite the shortfalls noted at this inspection, children do make progress in some areas of their lives. For example, one child now has far fewer incidents than previously recorded. Staff have helped this child to develop some self-reflection and a new sense of responsibility for age-appropriate behaviour. Staff have also worked well with children in relation to transitions between schools. Staff have ensured that these are well planned and well supported. As a result, children have started the new school year well.

Children have the opportunity to express their views and have contributed significantly to the physical development of the home. This has led to the environment now being truly homely.

Staff support children with their interests. For example, one child has joined scouts and has quickly settled into the group. Staff also take children on holidays and for days out to interesting places. This shows children that staff do want to support them and are genuinely interested in their well-being.

Children continue to see their families often. Professionals note that staff's commitment and advocacy relating to family time is an area of strength. As stated in

previous inspections, staff continue to do this because they know how important this is for the children in their care.

Staff and children do have good relationships. Partners and parents are positive about the impact that these relationships have. Children can identify adults in the home that they would talk to if they had a worry. Staff are clear that they want the best for the children they care for. However, the inconsistent approach to care and poorly applied safety systems around the children mean that they do not always have a safe environment to grow and develop in.

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

Staff still do not follow guidelines when children make allegations. On one occasion, the senior member of staff on duty did not act with vigilance when another member of staff reported a potential allegation. This senior member of staff also queried the information they received directly with the child involved. This could have compromised any investigation undertaken by statutory agencies had this been necessary. This incident was also not reported to the manager quickly so that they could risk assess this situation. As a result, a member of staff who had an allegation made against them remained on shift through the day and into the evening. Similar concerns in safeguarding practice were raised at the last full inspection in June 2021. Despite work done with staff by the provider, there has been insufficient improvement. This leaves children vulnerable and at potential risk of harm.

Staff do not always have the skills to de-escalate difficult incidents with children. Inspectors saw staff failing to act decisively to help a child who was highly distressed and physically aggressive. The manager did not take charge of the situation despite it escalating. This led to a disorganised response and staff were hurt. Staff and managers are inconsistent in their reflection after incidents. There are occasions when the staff show more insight than managers about how things happened and what can be learned. One child told inspectors that they were frustrated by another child's difficult incidents and they are 'scary'. This means that children cannot be certain that staff will keep them safe. This has an adverse impact on children's experience in the home.

Staff do not consistently implement a boundary about children not coming into the office. During the inspection, one child was able to push their way into the office. This contributed to an incident escalating and becoming dangerous for that child and the staff. Inspectors noted that staff left the cupboard in the office where they keep hazardous materials and knives open for a long period of time the following day. The responsible individual had also noted this shortfall during her last audit of the home. This lack of attention to safety poses a significant risk to children and staff.

Staff do not always understand children's risk assessments. Managers do not ensure that when staff have language barriers, they fully understand the guidance they need to manage children's behaviour. On one occasion, this led to a child becoming angry and upset in the community. It also led to significant damage to one of the

home's cars. The member of staff was not able to manage this child's distress and this led to the child being at risk of harm near a road.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate**

The home has been without a registered manager for five months. The interim manager has not applied to register with Ofsted. This means that the home lacks a permanent, experienced manager to lead the improvement work and stabilise the home.

Leaders and managers are not yet providing clear, consistent guidance to staff. The manager told inspectors that she is frustrated that staff do not follow what guidance is in place. However, the manager's inconsistent approach to boundaries and practice undermines this statement. For example, children and the manager told inspectors that weekend bedtimes were dependent on who was working. This unpredictable approach leaves children confused and frustrated. In addition, children are worried about the failings of the home. Staff have not helped children to understand that this is for adults to address, not them. These factors show that the home is not being consistently well led.

Managers are inconsistent in how they model behaviour to staff. For example, the manager is concerned about judgemental and institutionalised language in children's records, but inspectors heard the manager using this type of language. This is not in line with the provider's stated underpinning approach to care.

Managers have not helped staff to understand risk assessments in detail and this has led to serious incidents. Once staff make managers aware of these incidents, managers work with individual staff to improve their understanding of children. They have also taken formal action, including dismissal, with staff when needed. While this is reassuring, it is a reactive rather than a proactive approach. This is also not consistently applied to all staff.

Managers check incident records and there are systems in place to oversee practice in the home. However, managers do not always check records in a timely way. On one occasion, this meant that managers were unaware that a child had made an allegation during an incident until several days later. Managers are aware that some staff are rigid in their approach to care. They have not challenged this with those staff in supervision. This is a missed opportunity to ensure that there is a positive change to the care children receive. The responsible individual completes a regular audit of the home and is increasingly aware of the shortfalls in practice. This gives some assurance about the oversight of the home.

Staff are now up to date with all their mandatory training. They have also completed additional training regarding their improvement journey. Despite this work, there have still been concerns about how staff act on allegations and follow risk assessments. This means that progress in practice is not embedded. This has been a concern at the home for several years and is not yet resolved.

The manager completes regular supervisions with staff. However, these lack reflection and do not consistently link to the findings in managers' monitoring. As a result, staff practice is not fully developed, and children continue to have variable care. In addition, one school noted that the inconsistent care negatively affected children's behaviour in school. All these factors have an impact on the security and care that children need.

## 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 positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on—</p> <p>mutual respect and trust;</p> <p>an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and</p> <p>positive responses to other children and adults.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans;</p> <p>help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone;</p> <p>de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(iv)(xi))</p> <p>In particular, the registered persons must ensure that staff are clear with children about acceptable behaviour and how they should treat adults and each other. The registered persons must also ensure that staff are able to safely de-escalate children's behaviour in line with their plans and support them to find non-physical ways of positively managing conflict.</p>	14 November 2021
<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>	14 November 2021



<p>that staff—</p> <p>help each child understand how to keep safe. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(ii))</p> <p>In particular, managers must ensure that staff help children to understand and, where necessary, work to change negative behaviours. This must be reflected in records as non-judgemental.</p> <p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</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>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 and the manager must know and understand their duties relating to safeguarding and whistle-blowing procedures. All staff and managers must respond to allegations and safeguarding concerns in line with the organisation’s safeguarding procedures. There must be a system in place to monitor and be assured that staff will act within these procedures. This monitoring of practice must include that staff act within the guidelines of children’s risk assessments and plans.</p> <p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</p>	<p>14 November 2021</p>
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p>	<p>14 November 2021</p>

<p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(d))</p> <p>In particular, the manager must ensure that the hazardous material and sharps cupboard is kept locked.</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. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a))</p> <p>In particular, the manager must ensure that staff understand and use the underpinning approach of the home outlined in the statement of purpose and this must be reflected in records about children's care. They should also ensure that boundaries are consistently applied without being rigid.</p> <p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</p>	<p>14 November 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>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate.</p>	<p>14 November 2021</p>

<p>(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b))</p> <p>In particular, managers and leaders must support the team to be consistent and work in collaboration with each other.</p> <p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</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>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child.</p> <p>(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c))</p> <p>In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that all staff are trained and are able to safely physically manage children's behaviour if needed. This must also be considered in the context of the layout of the home.</p>	<p>14 November 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>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>(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(d))</p> <p>In particular, the manager must ensure that there is a sufficient number of qualified and permanent staff employed to provide safe care to three children and meet their needs.</p>	<p>14 November 2021</p>

<p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</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>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h))</p> <p>In particular, the registered manager must ensure that monitoring and review systems are effective in considering safeguarding in all areas of practice. Monitoring and review systems must also be used to understand and improve the quality of care provided to children.</p> <p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</p>	<p>14 November 2021</p>
<p>The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children's home if—</p> <p>there is no registered manager in respect of the home; and</p> <p>the registered provider—</p> <p>is an organisation or a partnership;</p> <p>If the registered provider appoints a person to manage the home, the registered provider must, without delay, give HMCI notice of—</p> <p>the name of the person so appointed; and</p> <p>the date on which the appointment takes effect. (Regulation 27 (1)(a)(b)(i) (2)(a)(b))</p> <p>In particular, the provider must permanently appoint a manager for the home and they must apply for registration without delay.</p>	<p>14 November 2021</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>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</p>	<p>14 November 2021</p>
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\*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

## Recommendations

- 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). This recommendation was made at the last inspection and is restated.
- 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 the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4). This recommendation was made at the last inspection and is restated.

## 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:** Horizon Care and Education Group Limited,  
Venture House, Unit 12 Prospect Business Park, Longford Road, Cannock WS11 0LG

**Responsible individual:** Rebecca Grimshaw

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

## Inspectors

Karol Keenan, Social Care Inspector  
Fiona Roche, Social Care Inspector

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