

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	6 April 2016
Unique reference number	1224663
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Horizon Care and Education Group Limited
Registered person address	Venture House, 12 Prospect Business Park, Longford Road, Cannock, Staffordshire WS11 0LG

Responsible individual	Cheri Callow
Registered manager	Emma Green
Inspector	Mary Timms

Inspection date	6 April 2016
Previous inspection judgement	N/A
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

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Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Leadership and management of the home are strong. The experienced, qualified and highly motivated registered manager closely monitors the provision of care and drives forward service development.
- Children and young people make good progress in all areas of their lives. They enjoy very positive relationships with staff, based on trust and mutual respect.
- Young people moving towards independence receive excellent support and learn the skills they will need to live independently in adulthood. This is a particular strength of the service.
- There is a stable team of staff who are appropriately skilled and committed to promoting the best possible outcomes for children and young people.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good. There is strong evidence that children and young people have become safer during their time at this home.
- The training provided to permanent staff is good. However, agency staff working in the home on a regular basis are not provided with access to the same core training. This raises the possibility that these staff will not fully understand their roles and responsibilities.
- An area of weakness identified during the inspection relates to children and young people very recently linking internet-enabled equipment to their mobile phones. The concern is that this occurred without staff understanding the practicalities of this link, or the impact on safeguarding arrangements.
- This inspection identified that, while a full-time programme of education is being finalised, structured daily activities are not routinely planned to cover every school day.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- Ensure that children and young people are engaged in suitable structured activities while full-time education is being finalised with the placing authority ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.15).
- Ensure that the workforce plan details the arrangements for staff, with particular reference to agency staff, to achieve induction and core training ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8).
- Ensure that staff continually assess the risks to each child (with particular reference to the use of mobile phones to link equipment to the internet) and the arrangements in place to protect them ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5).

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is privately owned and is registered to provide care and accommodation for three children with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

This is the first inspection of this home since re-registration to reflect changes to the limited company ownership.

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
N/A		

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
This is the first inspection of the home following re-registration, which was required to reflect a change in the limited company directly operating the home. This has had no impact on children and young people, as the owner, manager and staff team remain the same. High-quality care provides a foundation from which children and young people have established trusting relationships with staff. While at times some are resistant to taking up the full range of care on offer, each child and young person is in a position where appropriate support and services are readily available to them. Parents speak highly of the support provided. Comments included, 'They do a fantastic job and I know they really care about xx (young person).' Children and young people have each made notable progress since admission. Staff were able to reflect that the children and young people are 'much more settled' and 'maturing quickly'. A child admitted following a previous placement breakdown benefited from the stability offered by the home and has now returned to the care of his family. Educational achievement is seen as important and individual progress is recognised and praised by staff. One young person is achieving well on a further education placement and is looking forward to continuing their education into 2017. Another is described as having 'excellent attendance at school', which is progress from their previous, more sporadic, attendance. When emergency admissions are accepted, interim education arrangements are actively pursued in consultation with placing teams. However, there are times when what should be a typical school day is left unstructured. This is a missed opportunity to offer learning activities and promote personal development. A particular strength is the individualised planning and support provided to young people moving towards independence. The effective and high-quality work provided by staff has resulted in one young person now being able to manage a personal budget in advance of living independently. The young person speaks highly of the support they have received and feels confident to move on.	

Children and young people are proud of their home. They enjoy living in a well-maintained and homely environment. Comments included, 'It is nice here; I really like the new pictures recently put up.' They are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms and some have worked alongside staff to decorate their rooms. As a result, they feel involved and have learned new skills.

Children and young people are in good health. While some young people opt to continue smoking, they are taught about the dangers to their health and are encouraged to stop. Physical activity is encouraged and, while some children and young people are at times resistant, they all understand that this is important to their long-term health. A recently re-structured and strengthened internal service provides support for emotional wellbeing and mental health, including the support of a regional child psychologist. This means that there is close oversight of mental health issues, and that professional guidance informs care arrangements. The team works well with external agencies to promote good health. A health professional commented that a named young person 'seems much more settled and has developed some reflective understanding of behaviours'.

Well-managed contact arrangements mean that family relationships are maintained. The impact of distance on children and young people who are placed a long way from home is considered, and additional support is provided to reduce the detrimental impact of extensive travel. An example of this is where staff have arranged structured activities and meetings at a halfway point.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Good practice in keeping children and young people safe is at the heart of all care arrangements. The staff attend training which ensures that they understand their roles and responsibilities in the protection of children and young people. Part of team development involves local safeguarding professionals being invited to the home to share their learning and experiences. For example, a professional working in the local authority team, aimed at reducing child sexual exploitation, visited a staff meeting recently in order to improve the knowledge and understanding in this area. A safe living environment is provided. Health and safety is prioritised, with an emphasis on fire safety. On admission, new residents are introduced to fire safety guidelines very quickly, ensuring that they all understand the required response should a real fire occur. Detailed risk assessments are also completed for each child and young person, with the aim of minimising their exposure to harm, these are well implemented. Children and young people have become safer while living at this home. For example, bullying behaviours have been reduced, which has left children and young people feeling much safer. Because of effective awareness-raising, one young person has shown an excellent insight into the potential to be sexually exploited and has raised her own identified concerns with the team about an external situation. Since the home was registered in December 2015, there has been only one 'missing from care' event, which was appropriately responded to. Additional work was undertaken with the young person to improve their understanding about the vulnerabilities of being missing without consent. Good, consistent behaviour management by staff means that children and young people's behaviours improve. Incentives are positively used to encourage children and young people to think about their behaviours and to meet individual targets. Physical intervention is rarely necessary, with only one incident reported which required a brief physical hold. Children and young people receive direct support and guidance about keeping safe	

which enhances their protection. One-to-one time with staff is facilitated in both a planned and a spontaneous manner to address personal issues, provide guidance and enhance protective behaviours. Topics such as internet safety are discussed with children and young people, and access to wi-fi is generally well managed and monitored. However, the inspection identifies an emerging concern as staff do not fully understand the practicalities of how some individuals are accessing the internet by tethering their personal phones to internet-enabled equipment. While there is no identified detrimental impact, this highlights that some aspects of the home's internet safety arrangements are weakened, as such a link is not subject to the same controls as the home's wi-fi service.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
The appropriately qualified and experienced registered manager provides strong and effective leadership. She ensures that staff deliver quality care which achieves the aims and objectives set out in the home's statement of purpose. Staff confirm that the manager is contactable and approachable, and said: 'The manager is supportive of children and staff'. Strong leadership and management is a key contributing factor to the good progress made by children and young people. Individual needs are prioritised in management oversight and action is taken, when necessary, to strengthen care arrangements, including challenging external agencies. For example, the manager recently stepped in to identify an appropriate education placement to ensure that there was no lag in arrangements. The manager has separately challenged the quality of an education plan, as she felt that this did not provide a true picture of educational attainment and needs. Staff are confident in the management structure, and are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Comments from staff described the team as 'happy' and 'supportive of each other'. The manager clearly understands the strengths of the service, is aspirational and committed to service development. During this last inspection period, the manager has worked hard to improve the stability of staffing. Having a consistent and committed team has led to improved and very positive relationships between children, young people and staff. A recent service development is the addition of a dedicated mental health professional, working across the region. While this new structure is in its infancy, there are firm plans for this arrangement to enhance the skills and knowledge of the staff team by providing additional staff training. The service is on track to ensure that permanent staff achieve the level 3 qualification by the relevant date, as required by children's homes regulations. The manager is aware that temporary staff must also achieve this same qualification and is of the opinion that the staff she uses have an equivalent qualification. The manager is planning to evaluate and evidence this more thoroughly. The organisation has a well-developed induction and training programme, which provides a broad range of core and refresher training for permanent staff at appropriate intervals. As a result, staff are skilled and have a good understanding	

of their roles and responsibilities. A weakness in relation to training is the lack of clarity within workforce planning about the requirements for training and qualifications of agency staff. Some who have worked regularly in the home have not undertaken the same key training as permanent staff. No detrimental impact has been identified as a result of this. However, a recommendation has been made to strengthen practice in this regard.

Involved professionals are confident in the management of the service and confirm that joint working is highly effective. Social workers and parents are kept updated on important issues. As a result, they are able to respond promptly and appropriately to issues arising. Comments included: 'Communication is fantastic. They always ensure that plans are seen and signed by me', and: 'All actions identified as necessary have been progressed, contact has been very positive and the staff are all very friendly.'

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards'.

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