

1224663

Registered provider: Horizon Care and Education Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home provides care for three children who have social and/or emotional needs. The experienced manager has been registered at this home since November 2017. She holds the level 5 qualification for managers of children's homes.

Inspection dates: 30 to 31 October 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 6 June 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/06/2018	Full	Outstanding
17/07/2017	Full	Good
25/10/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
06/04/2016	Full	Good

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

Recommendations

- No more than half the staff on duty at any one time, by day or night at the home, should be from an external agency. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.17)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The home continues to provide exceptional support to children who have experienced issues surrounding their sexuality and gender, rejection and trauma. An independent reviewing officer said that the team conducts, 'therapeutic repair work with a view to the future. They provide a balance of nurture and empowerment.'

The children say they feel loved and cared for, and describe the positive difference that living here is making in their lives. One spoke of finding total acceptance here and calls the staff and other children 'my family'. In a letter, he wrote, 'Before I came here, I had no self-respect or care but now I can say I love myself which is something I could not have said a year ago.'

The team's non-judgemental approach is enabling the staff to assist children in exploring and navigating their own identities. This acceptance is enabling the children to be more settled, build confidence and address previously negative behaviours. This approach reflects the theoretical model that underpins the staff group's work in the home and wider organisation.

Professionals praise how the staff know children extremely well and are proactive advocates for them. This has enabled the children to become more able to voice their opinions and wishes even when these differ from those of the staff and professionals involved. This approach is empowering children to use the complaints process in the home, and to challenge professionals such as social workers when they disagree with the decisions being made.

Children have complex health and emotional needs. These are adeptly responded to and are escalated to specialist teams. This ensures that the children receive a prompt response and treatment when needed. When children's emotional and mental health declines, the staff group provides the wraparound support and nurture that assists the children in accessing the right support. An example includes daily visits to a child who was an in-patient for an extended period. This continuity demonstrates the team's commitment to children through good and bad experiences.

The staff worked relentlessly to succeed in getting children into education, irrespective of their histories of non-attendance and poor engagement. A social worker commended the home for giving their child the experience of being in a classroom setting. This was achieved by staff attending with the child and gradually withdrawing. This provided the child with a positive experience of school, something they had not previously had. A child sat, and passed, 14 GCSEs and functional skill exams. Staff advocated for him to sit the exams at home to address his anxiety of being in the school setting.

Children are supported with the transition to adult placements. Two children are on independence plans, enabling them to develop their budgeting and other life skills. One is now having a more gradual move into his next home. Staff arranged an extension for the existing level of support to ensure that he is fully settled before their input is reduced. A family member stated that children trust staff to maintain contact in the same way that families do when a child moves out.

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

The work of the staff and their ability to engage with children and develop positive relationships are evident. They expertly build attachments with children who present with challenging and complex behaviours. Staff provide a safe and consistent approach that ensures that the children feel able to test boundaries but are clear on what is acceptable behaviour. The children have similar day-to-day experiences to their peers, including play dates and age-/risk-appropriate free time. The children interact comfortably with each other and describe themselves as family. At times the children have fallouts and disagreements, as in most households. These are managed effectively.

There has been a significant reduction in the previously high levels of inappropriate sexualised behaviour displayed by a child. This has been managed in a sensitive way that still enables the child to have hugs and cuddles. Children feel safe enough to be themselves and therefore are exhibiting less anger, frustration and self-hate. Feeling at ease is enabling them to express their emotions more freely and has led to a reduction in incidents and the need for any physical interventions.

Despite children arriving with histories of going missing, incidents of children going missing rarely occur. When such an incident does occur, the staff follow the necessary protocols and ensure that they actively look for the child. When children are out they remain in contact with the staff and have established strategies such as agreed safe words that enable staff to know that they require assistance.

After being out with friends, the older children have, on occasion, returned under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. The staff ensure that the children learn about taking ownership and responsibility for their actions. This is done in a way that recognises that, as teenagers, they will naturally make bad choices at times. Their key-working supports this preventative and responsive way of working. A social worker praising this approach said they, 'recognise his vulnerabilities and allow for risk and mishaps'.

The staff speak with the children about various safeguarding issues that ensure that they

are aware of events in society at large. For example, there are discussions about the dangers of gangs and knife crime.

When allegations and complaints have been made these have been followed up and actioned appropriately, and managed in a way that maintains established relationships. A social worker stated that it was this sense that staff will be there regardless that has led to the placement being successful. This unconditional regard demonstrates that the children are the priority for all the staff.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager is passionate about the children, and this is mirrored by her staff. She proudly and skilfully runs the home as a supportive family home. This involves knowing the children and the staff, being aware of their personal issues and pressures, and managing children's behaviours. Her inspirational approach to caring for the children and motivating staff is commended by her team and other professionals.

She is an enabler who promotes the nurture of the children and the staff. This is borne out through the longevity of the children's placements, despite their past placement histories, and the low staff turnover. Since the last inspection, two staff have been promoted to home managers in the organisation, and others have become seniors in the home.

The manager is continually seeking to improve the children's life chances. She and the team are animated about the progress the children are making. They regularly review the children's targets, progress and outcomes. This is evident in the way that they advocate for the children. This is demonstrated in numerous examples, including children having their first holiday abroad and being in possession of their birth certificate and passport when previously these were withheld.

The manager uses supervision and ongoing discussion as a source of development for the staff. Staff enjoy their supervision as it gives them time to reflect on the difference that they are making in the children's lives and their personal progress.

The home's staff team is boosted by regular, long-term, experienced agency staff. At times, mainly in school holidays, there have been occasions when there were two agency staff on duty with one core staff member. Although the agency staff are well known to the children, this staff imbalance has been raised as a recommendation.

The manager is continually reviewing the service and ensuring that it is meeting the children's needs. Any areas of weaknesses identified are worked through with staff. This non-complacent attitude is a strength of the service.

The manager challenges responses that she feels are not effective or in the children's interest, and a social worker said that this 'keeps me on my toes'.

Equality and diversity are incorporated throughout by ensuring that each child and staff

member learns to recognise their worth and abilities and builds on these.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: 1224663

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: Emma Carrington

Registered manager: Wendy Greaney

Inspector

Sonia Hay, social care inspector

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