

1245572

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 owned and managed by a private provider. It offers care for up to four children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

There has been no registered manager at the home since 26 March 2025.

At the time of this inspection, three children were living at the home.

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 April 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 21 May 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/05/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
18/04/2023	Full	Good
14/06/2022	Full	Good
21/12/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Children are having mixed experiences of living at the home. One child has made progress from their starting point, resulting in fewer instances where they struggle to manage their behaviour towards staff. Another child has regressed in some areas of their development. One child has recently moved into the home.

Children lack routine in the home, which has resulted in them going to bed late and then staying in bed during the day. This then affects their willingness and ability to engage in education. One child, who is of college age, has withdrawn from education. The other child refuses to attend school. Furthermore, staff were unaware that the education provision for one child was about to end, and no plans have been made for after the Easter break.

Children's health needs are not always met. Staff speak to children about the importance of attending appointments, but this has little effect. However, the staff successfully addressed a child's fear of the dentist through effective interventions. Following this work and support by staff, the child had a tooth extracted and is now free of pain.

Children are not encouraged to participate in activities either with their peers or staff. It is accepted that children just want to be in the community with their friends. This prevents children from developing relationships with staff. However, staff discuss a range of topics with children that are tailored to their specific needs. Children's wishes and feelings are captured in discussions with staff.

Staff support children in seeing their families. Family members said that staff keep them up to date about important events in their children's lives. Those spoken to said that staff are supportive of them and the children.

The home is well maintained and furnished to a high standard. It is warm and welcoming, and children's bedrooms are personalised and reflect their likes and interests. All but one bedroom was clean and tidy at the time of this inspection. The deputy asked the child to assist in tidying up, and the child agreed.

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

Children say that they feel safe living at the home and that staff are trying to keep them safe. Children's risk assessments and plans are clear, regularly reviewed and easy for staff to follow. Staff have helped children to develop better coping strategies when experiencing difficult emotions, leading to a reduction in the children's risks. This has resulted in fewer occasions when staff need to hold or guide children to keep them and others safe. When staff use consequences to support children's understanding of the impact of their behaviour on others, these are fair and proportionate.

Staff promptly respond when children go missing. They follow the plans and ensure that the relevant agencies are notified. Staff warmly welcome children when they return and offer them the opportunity to speak with someone independently. This ensures that children can share the reason they felt the need to go missing. Family members are kept updated, with one saying, 'I really appreciated the deputy keeping me up to date because I was so worried.'

Complaints made by children are thoroughly investigated and dealt with appropriately. Children are informed of the action taken. Internal investigations into staff practice are promptly carried out. Actions taken are proportionate and balanced.

Staff are professionally curious and engage in conversations with children who may be vulnerable to criminal exploitation. Furthermore, they seek advice and support from external agencies. Meetings with other professionals provide the opportunity for multi-agency working and the sharing of information. There is an agreed safety plan to ensure that staff can keep the child safer.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

There have been significant changes to the staff team since the last inspection. This includes the registered manager, who has recently left the home. The responsible individual and two managers from sister homes are providing management support. Staff said that they appreciate the support they receive.

There has been a heavy reliance on agency staff. This is because there is not always enough permanent staff to care for the children. Staff said that they have struggled with the shortages, and it has affected their care of the children. There is also a lack of experience across the staff team. Furthermore, the non-permanent staff members mainly work during the night, which is when children are most vulnerable, particularly when they abscond from the home.

The manager's monitoring has not always been effective, resulting in a lack of oversight of the children's plans. Staff have access to a wide range of training that is relevant to the needs of the children living at the home. However, the home has allowed some training to lapse, and one member of staff has not attained a relevant qualification in line with regulatory timescales. This shortfall was raised at the last inspection and will be restated.

Staff now receive improved supervision sessions. Additionally, team meetings take place regularly, and staff are given opportunities to reflect and discuss the needs of all the children. However, the non-permanent staff do not receive supervision from the home's manager.

While communication is good with external agencies, there is a lack of challenge to professionals when decisions are made that have a negative impact on children.

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, The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'. The registered person must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. 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— the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma. The relevant date is— 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) (4)(a)(b) (5)(a)) This requirement has been restated.	28 May 2025
The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans; understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers;	30 June 2025

promote opportunities for each child to learn informally; 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; 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; and help each child to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 8 (1)(2)(i)(iii)(v)(vi)(ix)(x))	
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(e))	30 June 2025
The enjoyment and achievement standard is that children take part in and benefit from a variety of activities that meet their needs and develop and reflect their creative, cultural, intellectual, physical and social interests and skills. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff help each child to— develop the child's interests and hobbies; participate in activities that the child enjoys and which meet and expand the child's interests and preferences; and that each child has access to a range of activities that enable the child to pursue the child's interests and hobbies. (Regulation 9 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(b))	30 June 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that where the placing authority or another relevant person does not provide the input and services needed to meet a child's needs during their time in the home or in preparation for leaving the home, the home challenges them to meet the child's needs (see regulation 5(c)). Staff should act as champions for the children, expecting nothing less than a good parent would. The registered person should consider the use of an independent advocate (see paragraph 4.16) if the child's needs are not being met. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 11, paragraph 2.8)
- The registered person should ensure that staff encourage children to take a proactive role in looking after their day-to-day health and well-being. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 33, paragraph 7.10)

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: 1245572

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Horizon Care and Education Group Limited

Registered provider address: 17 Wolverhampton Road, Cannock, Staffordshire WS11 1AP

Responsible individual: Richard Lewis

Registered manager: Sharon Mackenzie

Inspector

Angela Ross, Social Care Inspector

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