

1255823

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a local authority. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to five children aged between 10 and 17; 16 is the maximum age on admission. According to the home's statement of purpose, it offers residential care with therapeutic emphasis and multi-agency involvement, to help children recover from experiences which have rendered them vulnerable and disrupted from their primary relationships.

Visit dates: 14 to 16 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 4 December 2019

Previous inspection judgement: Good

Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for
- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings from the visit

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Children who live in the home present as happy, relaxed and comfortable in their surroundings. The home environment is well presented and has a welcoming and homely feel. Children are fully encouraged to express their views freely.

The interests of children are at the core of activities provided. For example, the downstairs of the home is fully decorated in readiness for Halloween. This was at the request of children. Great thought and innovative ideas were put into these unique decorations. Many of the children have a keen interest in art and design. There is a whole room in the home dedicated to this. Children can freely access many resources to enable them to express this creativity. Furthermore, there are displays of the amazing artwork produced by children throughout the home. Children take great pride in their creations. This means that children have a sense of belonging which has a positive impact on their self-esteem and self-worth.

Children talk positively about the home. Children call it home and some comment that they do not feel like they are in care. This contributes to children's feelings of safety. All of the children have hobbies; these include fishing, cycling, cosplay and horse riding.

Some children have pets which they take full responsibility for. These children work hard to achieve this goal. This gives children an incentive for positive behaviour, opportunities to be responsible and enables them to develop independent skills. This is because they are trusted to care for and meet all the needs of the animals by themselves. Staff are on hand to support when required, for example when a pet needs to be taken to the vet. The views of the other children and staff in the home are sought, independently, prior to any new pet being acquired.

Transitions are carefully planned and considered prior to a child moving into the home. The registered manager and staff gather relevant in-depth information about children's needs, interests and important relationships. This is from a variety of sources, such as meeting and talking to the child, discussions with family members, information from social workers and individuals from their school. This means that managers and staff are equipped with key information to ensure that transitions into the home are as smooth as they can be. In addition, the registered manager carefully considers the impact this may have on the other children who already live in the home. Consideration is given to the changing dynamics as a result of children spending more time at home due to the pandemic. This helps children to feel safe, cared for and important from the moment they arrive.

All of the children receive educational provision. Throughout the lockdown period, children's educational needs continued to be met. Some staff are from a teaching background and were able to use these skills to ensure that children had continuity of education when some schools had to temporarily close or alter their provision.

Equality and diversity issues are central to the ethos of the home. Staff pride themselves on the values of equality and are positive role models. This means that

children live in an accepting, homely environment. It also enables them to explore their identities in a safe and supportive way.

Despite the limitations of COVID-19, children have been able to maintain essential contact with family members and important individuals in their lives. Since living at the home, some children have resumed relationships which were previously considered estranged. This has been achieved by the registered manager and their staff team carefully planning and giving consideration to the needs of all of those involved.

The safety of children

Not all children are safeguarded effectively when using mobile devices. This is because children who are at risk of child sexual exploitation are not fully protected when using mobile phones. As a result, there have been several incidents where children have had inappropriate online contact with strangers.

There have also been occasions where children have been encouraged, by other children in the home, to engage in these unsafe behaviours. This is despite these risks being identified and control measures being in place. These measures are therefore not effective. When such incidents have occurred, the registered manager consults with other professionals and reviews plans. They also follow appropriate safeguarding procedures, when required, and update children's risk assessments where necessary. Despite this, the signs of children becoming involved in exploitative relationships have not been identified before they occur. As a result, staff have not been able to prevent these unavoidable incidents from happening in the first instance. There is some monitoring in place as staff have identified the inappropriate contacts. However, this is realised after the incident has already occurred.

There are also shortfalls relating to the management and recording of self-harming behaviour. Records of such incidents lack detail of the behaviour, details around injuries sustained and whether any follow-up work had been completed. This has resulted in children being left potentially vulnerable on occasion. For example, control measures were not considered when a child was exposed to a situation which could trigger their self-harming behaviour. The registered manager can provide the required information verbally, but this is not reflected in the records.

Children have clear and consistent boundaries. This helps children to feel safe and promotes a sense of family life and belonging. The members of the staff team are committed and have supported and continue to support children in what is an unprecedented time.

Leaders and managers

Despite the identified shortfalls, the registered manager fully understands them and already has plans in place to address them. The registered manager is experienced and demonstrates that the children are central to everything they do.

The registered manager has responded positively to most of the requirements and recommendations identified at the previous inspection. Sanctions are managed well, the children's wishes and feelings are evident in the quality of care reports, and staff supervision records are much improved. However, not all staff have completed up-to-date training. This includes new and well-established staff members. The main weakness is around extremism and radicalisation training. Due to the shortfalls around online safety, this is of particular importance.

All of the children make progress. The registered manager has implemented 'then and now' forms. This is an effective tool for monitoring the individual progress of children. It contains information regarding children's needs and challenges from when they first moved into the home and is reviewed every few months. For example, it shows that children who struggled to settle at bedtime, when they were new to the home, now settle well. This detailed recording demonstrates that the registered manager and staff have high aspirations for children, believe in them and support them to achieve their goals. Targets, no matter how small, are individualised, meaningful and achievable. This further gives children a sense of achievement, focus and purpose. It can also be used as a reminder to show children how far they have come.

Staff report that they feel happy and well supported in their role. There is a clear culture in the home that managers and staff reflect openly on their practice. When learning has been identified, this is shared with the staff team through reflective team meetings and individual staff supervisions. This means that there is consistency and continual learning, by sharing good practice, and engagement of professional discussions. This enables staff to develop and progress further in their roles.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, independent visits, in accordance with regulation 44, have continued to take place. These have been conducted through a balance of virtual and on-site visits. This has provided an additional layer of checks to the home. This has also provided essential information about how children and staff have managed during this time.

The manager's own quality checks have identified some areas that require improvement. However, the shortfalls identified from this inspection had not been identified. This includes the issues around e-safety, records relating to self-harming incidents and gaps in staff training.

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
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the child'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 staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13(1)(a)(b)(2)(c))	24/12/2020
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— 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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(vi)(b))	24/12/2020
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and	24/12/2020

positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to understand, in a way that is appropriate according to the child’s age and understanding, personal, sexual and social relationships, and how those relationships can be supportive or harmful; and help each child to develop the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitative or harmful relationship. (Regulation 11(1)(b)(c)(2)(a)(vi)(vii))	
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Children’s home details

Unique reference number: 1255823

Registered provider: Hampshire County Council

Registered provider address: 3rd Floor, Elizabeth II Court North, The Castle, Winchester, Hampshire SO23 8UG

Responsible individual: John Stacey

Registered manager: Kerry Pringle

Inspector

Kelly Marchmont, social care inspector

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