

1258089

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This children's home is registered to accommodate up to four children with social and emotional difficulties. The home is owned by a private organisation, which has several other homes.

A manager has been in post since May 2020 and is currently going through the process of being registered with Ofsted.

Visit dates: 1 to 2 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 18 September 2019

Previous inspection judgement: requires improvement to be 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 identified no serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Children are happy living at this home. Staff and children enjoy good relationships with each other. Staff understand the children's individual needs and meet them effectively. Clear boundaries, routines and positive challenge from the staff mimic the role of a good parent.

The regular key-work sessions with children show the strength of the open and honest discussions. Children have debated and questioned a diverse range of topics during lockdown. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement have captured the children's curiosity and raised their awareness.

The children have stayed in touch with family and friends. Some have felt frustrated about the restrictions during lockdown, which has affected their behaviour at times. Children have made good use of technology and social distancing since the lifting of the restrictions, and their emotional well-being has improved. Activities such as pamper days, watching films, baking and culture evenings have helped to ease the boredom and have bonded relationships in the home.

Children can approach the staff with any concerns with confidence that staff will listen to them. Regular meetings with the children provide opportunities for them to influence their own care and how their home runs. The manager responds sensitively to the children's views and takes them seriously, irrespective of the outcome. The mantra 'Keep Calm We Care for You' in one of the manager's responses is typical of the child-centred culture that benefits the children.

Children's health needs are clearly understood and promoted effectively by staff. They ensure that children have access to the relevant health services when needed, for example specialised support from the children and adolescent mental health services. Children show a keen interest in maintaining healthy lifestyles, which promotes their physical and emotional well-being.

Children's reintegration into education is very encouraging as they show capacity to improve their future prospects.

The safety of children

Children say that they feel safe. Staff understand the children's risks as defined in the written risk assessments. Staff use their positive relationships with children to promote their safety and welfare.

Missing-from-care incidents have been low. When children have been missing or absent from home, staff follow individual missing-from-care protocols.

Consequences are put in place to reflect the severity of the incident of going missing, which the children have found to be fair. A mobile charger was bought to ensure that children's phones are always fully charged when they are out, and staff can contact them.

Staff understand the children's traits and personalities, which helps them to manage a range of challenging behaviours. During the COVID-19 pandemic, incidents of positive behaviour have outweighed the negative incidents. This has been due to children learning to self-regulate as they develop into young adults. There have been no physical interventions, which is testament to the quality of the relationships and de-escalation practices.

Staff understand the procedures to follow in the event of safeguarding concerns.

Leaders and managers

A new manager has been leading the home since May 2020. His registered manager's application is currently lodged with Ofsted. The manager has made some positive changes to the home. He has provided clear direction and support to the staff team. Motivated staff have pulled together to support the children and safeguard them during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The manager and staff are approachable and child-centred. Their practice shows that they care about the children unconditionally. They ensure that children's individual plans remain current.

The independent visits have taken place in person during the COVID-19 pandemic. Children and professionals are encouraged to share their opinions and the independent visitor is satisfied that children are safeguarded effectively, and their welfare is promoted. No recommendations have been raised at the two most recent visits, which is a positive reflection of the advancements made by leaders and managers to improve the children's experiences and outcomes. The manager closely monitors activities within the home and regularly consults with children, staff and stakeholders to continually improve service delivery.

Good partnerships with professionals promote effective working practices that are helpful to children. Professionals comment positively about the children's quality of care and report good levels of communication from the staff team. The manager is not afraid of challenging professionals who fail to deliver services to children within their role and responsibilities. This makes him a good advocate for children.

Children have been cared for by a core staff team. New staff have adapted well into the team during the COVID-19 pandemic. Team support through various methods, including supervisions, team meetings, online training and mentoring, informs everyone's learning and development.

The requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection have been met. No requirements or recommendations are made following this visit.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1258089

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: Sean Milnes

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Jacqueline Malcolm, Social Care Inspector

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