

1258831

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three children with emotional, behavioural and/or mental health needs. The accommodation is set in three individual living areas, with shared communal space.

The registered manager has been in post since June 2020.

Visit dates: 2 to 3 December 2020

Previous inspection date: 4 September 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

The positive relationships that the staff nurture with the young people have enabled the young people to adapt well to the new ways of living in response to COVID-19. Staff purposefully maintain a child-focused and low anxiety atmosphere in the home. As a result, the young people develop trust and a belief that they are valued and that their safety matters.

Young people say that they can talk to the staff if they have any worries. The trusting relationships developed means that the young people have a strong voice in the home and influence the care that they receive. Consequently, the young people experience being heard and learn to recognise that their voice counts.

Staff support the young people to keep in touch with their family and friends. Family visits consider the young people's wishes and are reviewed regularly to reflect any changes to the young person's and the family's circumstances. One parent said that the staff go above and beyond to support family relationships, for example by offering whole family support following a bereavement. Staff recognise the complexities of family contact for some young people while understanding the significance in helping the young people to develop their sense of identity.

Progression of the young people moving towards full-time education or training has been delayed. This is partly due to the lack of alternative education provision and availability in the locality due to COVID-19. Even so, the young people are making steady progress from their starting points and building confidence in their academic achievements. Staff ensure that there is structure to the young people's days.

There are lots of good resources available for the young people to pursue their interests and relax. Additional games, art materials and outside equipment have been purchased to make life easier for the young people during the COVID-19 lockdown periods. The young people significantly benefited during the summer from spending in the home's large garden, enjoying nature and outside barbecues.

The safety of children

Young people say that they feel safe living at the home. One young person described learning new strategies to deal with difficult feelings, such as writing in a journal. Another young person said that the positive relationships she has with the staff have been the key to helping her. Many of young people's high-risk behaviours, including incidents of self-harm, have reduced.

Staff have a good knowledge of the young people's strengths and vulnerabilities. Young people are supported to take age-appropriate risks and explore teenage friendships. Alert staff support the young people in developing their understanding of danger through direct work, reflective and open conversations. This helps the young people to develop problem-solving skills and increases their awareness of risks for themselves.

Young people receive excellent support to increase their social and independence skills. Young people enjoy learning to budget, food shop and prepare their meals. Through staff's guidance, the young people develop independent living skills at a pace and level they are comfortable with. This helps the young people to grow in confidence and improve their self-esteem.

Staff respond to the young people with clear boundaries that underpin an atmosphere of warmth and security. Young people are helped to explore what their triggers or thought processes may be. As a result, young people are relaxed in the staff's company and are confident to share their feelings and future aspirations.

Young people rarely go missing from care. However, when young people's whereabouts have been unknown, the staff are clear about what action to take. On one occasion, this involved staff following and shadowing young people onto a train, eventually managing to ensure their safe return home. This proactive action sends young people a strong message that their safety and welfare are of the utmost importance to the staff.

The registered manager and staff promote an open, transparent culture, where the young people are encouraged to express themselves and participate in decision-making. Staff recognise that listening to young people is vital to keeping them safe.

Leaders and managers

An effective handover and transition for the new registered manager has provided consistency and stability for the children. The morale is good in the home. Staff say they have felt well supported, particularly throughout the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Training continues in a variety of formats to ensure that there is continued and effective staff development. Leaders have taken proactive steps to alleviate further potential barriers for training that requires face-to-face interaction, such as behaviour management, by training staff in-house to facilitate this learning.

The registered manager and senior staff ensure that all children's plans are reviewed regularly, considering COVID-19. Staff clearly understand these plans and implement them appropriately.

Leaders ensure that the staff receive good-quality support via formal and informal supervision, regular team meetings and careful monitoring of training. Some staff are out of timescales for refresher training courses because of the COVID-19 restrictions. However, there are firm plans in place to address this with training booked for the staff early in the new year.

Staff and the managers promote an inclusive culture in the home. This helps the young people to safely explore their individuality and develop a positive self-view.

The previous requirement and recommendation made at the last inspection have been met.

No requirements or recommendations are made following this visit

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1258831

Registered provider: ARC HD Services Limited

Registered provider address: ARC HD Services, Wessex House, Upper Market Street, Eastleigh SO50 9FD

Responsible individual: Lee Roberts

Registered manager: Richard Boyes

Inspector

Anne-Marie Davies, Social Care Inspector

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