

1266835

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This home provides short breaks for children aged between eight and 18 who may have a learning disability and/or complex health needs.

The home provides care for up to five children at any given time. The home is owned and operated by a national organisation.

The manager was appointed in September 2020 and is currently in the process of registering with Ofsted.

Visit dates: 3 to 4 November 2020

Previous inspection date: 11 February 2020

Previous inspection judgement: Declined in effectiveness

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 are well cared for and love visiting for short breaks at this home. Staff know the children well and are guided by clear, individualised and detailed plans. Parents and other professionals are involved in the formulation of these plans, meaning that there is a cohesive approach to each child's care.

Consultation with children is good. Staff meet with children at the beginning and end of each visit to agree what the child wishes to do for their visit and what can be done to make the next visit even better. Children have chosen to call this creative consultation approach 'very important people meetings'.

When children leave the home, staff ensure that they have a proper send off. For the most recent child who left, this included receiving a lovely photo album and a good-luck video message from the child's favourite band.

Overall, the environment is of a good quality, complemented by the many photos of the children and copies of their artwork on the wall. However, in some bedrooms, televisions are boxed in, which does detract from the homely environment the staff have created. Major building work is planned for the spring, which will provide children with a wet room, a new kitchen and widened doors for wheelchair access.

Children take part in a wide range of activities that are fun and purposeful. Children are learning to cook and love this activity. One child made a birthday cake for his brother during their stay. The home has extensive outdoor space as well as a playroom which has a significant amount of sensory equipment. These areas provide children with ample space for activities, arts and crafts.

Feedback from parents and a social worker is very positive. Parents said the home is 'amazing' and the staff are 'great'. A social worker said how important the home has been to a family, especially during the lockdown period.

The safety of children

Children are kept safe at the home. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of safeguarding practices and procedures, appropriately considering the needs and additional vulnerabilities of the children they care for. Records of safeguarding events are clear and comprehensive.

Risk is well managed. Children's risk assessments are of a good quality. They provide staff with clear guidance on children's individual risks and actions taken to mitigate these risks. Behaviour support plans are individualised, detailed and current. These also provide clear guidance for staff.

Fire safety is managed well. Each child has a personal evacuation plan, covering day and night. These plans provide staff with detailed guidance on how to support each child should the fire alarms sound. Children also take part in regular fire drills. By carrying out regular checks on fire prevention and detection equipment, staff ensure all equipment is in good working order should it be needed.

Leaders and managers

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the home's strengths and areas for improvement. The new manager is already addressing the areas requiring improvement, using information from effective monitoring and feedback from the independent visitor's reports. The manager is appropriately qualified and experienced for the role and is in the process of applying for registration with Ofsted. Staff and parents are very positive regarding the new manager's appointment.

Leaders and managers have ensured that the requirements and recommendation from the previous inspection have been met.

Leaders and managers are dealing with the restrictions imposed by the pandemic well. They have changed how short breaks are delivered. Currently, only one child is visiting the home each day, unless their sibling also receives support from the home, in which case the siblings come in at the same time. To enable all of the children to receive short breaks, the home is currently operating seven days per week. These actions are helping to protect children, families and staff.

Staff receive a good range of training, which covers mandatory training as well as specialist training, to meet individual children's needs. Due to the pandemic, this has included virtual training sessions.

Staff benefit from receiving good-quality supervision that is reflective and aids their development. Actions from the previous sessions are reviewed and new actions set. Clear records are maintained of these sessions. Staff feel supervision is supportive and effective.

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

Recommendations

- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments.
(‘Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 15 paragraph 3.9)
In particular, review the storage of televisions in three children's bedrooms.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1266835

Registered provider: Action For Children

Registered provider address: 3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road, Watford,
Hertfordshire WD18 8AG

Responsible individual: Lee Furniss

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Wendy Anderson, Social Care Inspector

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