

1280370

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This is one of several children's homes operated by a private company. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two children or young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

If required, children and young people can access the organisation's school and therapy department.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since the home opened in July 2018.

Visit dates: 1 to 2 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 3 December 2019

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

The care of children

Children benefit from unconditional support that is delivered in a nurturing and caring manner. Care practice is underpinned by strong reciprocal relationships between the children and staff. A sense of stability and belonging derives from these relationships. Children said that the best thing about living at the home is their staff.

Staff have made every effort to overcome the barriers brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff have made good use of technology to ensure that children can keep in touch with the important people in their lives. A parent said, 'Staff have done their best. I have been able to keep in touch with [Name of child] using video calls. This has been important for both me and [Name of child].'

Staff have a detailed understanding of each child's needs. Care planning has been adapted to ensure that these needs continue to be prioritised and met by those involved in each child's care. A social worker said, 'In my view, they have adapted well. They have continued to keep [Name of child] safe and meet all his needs.'

Staff have worked hard to ensure that children are working to a structured plan. This has ensured that good routines and consistent boundaries are maintained. For example, in the absence of formal schooling, a programme of home schooling has been delivered. Staff have been exceptionally creative when using the resources available to them, providing age-appropriate learning opportunities that are both purposeful and fun.

The safety of children

Children's safety is given a high priority. Staff have an in-depth understanding of each child's behaviours, risks and vulnerabilities. High levels of staff supervision, support and guidance mean that children do not engage in risk-taking behaviours such as going missing from home.

The need and demand for attention is constantly high for these children. Staff work hard to keep the children focused by providing a range of constructive and safe activities. These activities take account of the restrictions brought about by lockdown and social distancing requirements, and are balanced well against the children's need to exercise and burn off excess energy.

Behaviour management focuses on praise and reward, and the use of sanctions is infrequent. However, when sanctions are used, they are repetitive and ineffective in changing behaviour and are not restorative in nature.

It is positive to note that during lockdown the relationship between the two children has grown stronger. However, arguments and disagreements remain commonplace. These can quickly escalate into physical altercations that require staff to separate the children, and, on occasions, physically restrain one particularly volatile child. This is always done as a last resort, with holds being applied in a caring and proportionate manner for the least possible time.

Leaders and managers

The registered manager provides strong leadership for a competent and committed staff team. She ensures that good standards of care are maintained within the context of current COVID-19 guidance, and that these are understood and implemented by staff.

Staffing has been a challenge at times. However, every effort has been made to limit the number of different people coming into the home. For example, staff have picked up extra shifts, and gaps have been covered by a small pool of staff from within the organisation. This has ensured that, as far as has been practically possible, continuity of care has been maintained.

Monitoring activity has remained strong. Monthly virtual visits have been completed by the independent visitor, who has scrutinised practice using a range of evidence sources. Opportunities for children to share their views are always offered and feedback from external stakeholders is consistently positive.

Staff confirm that they feel supported by the manager. New staff have been inducted well and all staff have benefited from regular formal supervision. Mandatory training has been kept up to date using online resources. This is in the process of being further strengthened as the home returns to safe face-to-face training.

Two requirements were made at the previous inspection. The manager has taken suitable action to address these.

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

Recommendations

- Any sanctions used to address poor behaviour should be restorative in nature, to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the staff caring for them and the wider community. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.38)

Specifically, the registered manager should evaluate each sanction to ensure that it is purposeful in changing behaviour, that it is restorative in nature and that it maximises the opportunity for children to reflect and learn.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1280370

Registered provider: Time-Out Children's Homes Limited

Registered provider address: Unit 2, Ripponden Mill, Mill Fold, Ripponden
Sowerby Bridge, West Yorkshire HX6 4DH

Responsible individual: Janet Lumb

Registered manager: Katie Tomlinson

Inspectors

Paul Scott, Social Care Inspector
Caroline Bertram, Social Care Inspector

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