

2529331

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This children's home is registered to accommodate up to five children. The home's statement of purpose states that it provides care for children with learning disabilities. This includes children with additional needs such as autism spectrum disorder, Asperger syndrome and other associated diagnoses.

The manager has been registered since April 2020.

Visit dates: 16 to 17 December 2020

Previous inspection date: Not previously inspected

Previous inspection judgement: Not previously inspected

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 say that they like living at this home because of the positive relationships they have with the team that cares for them. Adults have nurtured trusting and meaningful connections with the children. With these strong foundations in place, the children are flourishing.

Contingency planning and risk management in response to COVID-19 are effective and well managed. The adults listen to the children, are interested in them, take them and their views seriously, and accept and respect them. As a result, the children experience care from adults who are committed to them through the best times and the worst of times. This has helped the children adjust to, and navigate through, the current COVID-19 pandemic.

The adults encourage the children to pursue their talents and hobbies. For one child, this has involved creating a well-resourced art and craft space. For another child, the adults provide safe opportunities for him to develop his musical and information technology (IT) interests. As a result of this encouragement, the children grow in confidence and improve their self-esteem.

Using wider organisational links, the team is creative in helping the children extend their interests, for example by supporting the children to arrange and organise a disco party via video-conferencing software for a group of adults with learning disabilities. The team recognises that community participation helps the children to develop empathy and important life skills. This broadens the children's horizons and enhances their life experiences and opportunities.

Feedback from a family member and a professional is extremely positive about the quality of care. Both said that children are at the centre of the team's practice. In line with the children's care plans, the adults are proactive in helping the children to maintain and develop relationships with their family, friends and significant others. The team welcomes visits from families and friends to the home. However, this is not currently possible due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The safety of children

Alert adults hold a good understanding of safeguarding and know what to do if they are worried about a child. The adults are vigilant to circumstances that may heighten risks and threaten the children's safety. Proactive and effective multi-agency partnership working helps the team to support and protect the children.

Clear boundaries and good communication underpin a culture where children feel safe and secure. Records show good use of direct work, including reflective and empathetic dialogue. There have been no incidents involving restrictive practices. The team favours an approach of positive reinforcement, praise and natural consequences. As a result, the children are learning alternative ways to manage themselves and their behaviour, alongside developing a greater understanding of dealing with their frustration and anxiety.

Adults encourage the children to have input and ownership of their care plans. For one child, this includes directing her to a 'calming box', which the adults have helped her to create, to help with difficult feelings. The team recognises that working alongside the children helps to empower them. Consequently, the children are receptive to learning about themselves and developing positive coping strategies.

While no children have been missing from the home, all the adults are very aware of the children's vulnerabilities. Individualised risk assessments clearly outline how the children need to be nurtured and supervised. The excellent understanding and awareness of the children's vulnerabilities mean that there is no staff complacency.

Leaders and managers

The home is run by a registered manager who is dedicated and passionate about improving the children's lives. The home is welcoming and warm and has been recently refurbished to a high standard. One parent described it as a 'home from home.'

A respectful and accepting culture permeates the home. This helps the children to safely explore their individuality and develop a positive self-image. Team members spoke of feeling especially well supported by each other and the managers during the uncertainties of COVID-19.

The adults and the managers have high expectations for the children and of each other. Each child's progress is scrutinised, and strategies are adapted and changed where necessary. This ensures that there is constant energy to help children move forward and progress.

The monitoring by the registered manager and the responsible individual in the organisation is conscientious and thorough. There is a drive to develop the team's skills and knowledge. This culture is rooted within the team, whose members reflect on their practice and enjoy the opportunities to explore feelings, effectiveness and dynamics at the home. This approach encourages openness and a willingness to learn. Through the leader's and registered manager's commitment to this way of working, the children benefit and improve their future life chances.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2529331

Registered provider: Assure Care Homes Limited

Registered provider address: Unit 4, Northbrook Industrial Estate, Hollybrook Road, Southampton, Hampshire SO16 6PB

Responsible individual: Luencina Zankl

Registered manager: Emily Carter

Inspector

Anne-Marie Davies, Social Care Inspector

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