

SC013828

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This children's home provides short-break care for up to six children who primarily have physical and/or learning disabilities. The home is located on a multi-purpose site and it is operated by a large charitable organisation.

Other than some short temporary closures, the setting has continued to deliver a short-break day and overnight service during COVID-19 (coronavirus), albeit at a reduced number.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since February 2020.

Visit dates: 2 to 3 November 2020

Previous inspection date: 19 June 2019

Previous inspection judgement: Good

Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19, 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

Since the last inspection, the home has experienced a significant change in staffing. Staff have continued to provide good-quality care and attention to the children. However, there have been shortfalls in record-keeping and administration processes.

Children enjoy their stay at the home and their families benefit from the support provided by the staff. Thoughtful and child-centred planning ensures that the children experience responsive care which is tailored to their individual needs. Staff spoke affectionately about the children and they know them very well. The inspector observed children as comfortable in their surroundings and relaxed in the presence of staff and each other.

Staff are ambitious for children. They are proactive in supporting the children to follow their interests and encourage them to experience new opportunities. Children access an excellent range of resources to enjoy in the home, these include: hydrotherapy swimming pool, cinema room, sensory room, and accessible and landscaped gardens. Staff also recognise that engagement in the wider community enhances the children's life experiences, enjoyment and well-being.

In the home, children particularly enjoy access to the Disney Channel, lots of toys and sensory equipment. The staff's careful planning for each child ensures individual likes and dislikes are well catered for. This helps to provide a stable environment for the children while giving them new experiences. This has been particularly beneficial for the children during the COVID-19 restrictions, while wider access to facilities in the local community has been limited.

Parts of the home's decor are in varied states of repair, as some maintenance tasks have not yet been completed. The space and layout of the dining room mean that staff are not always able to sit and share meals with the children. This is a missed opportunity for the staff provide a more family-like atmosphere. The provider has plans to improve the day-to-day living experience for children by creating a 'teenage room' for them to enjoy.

Staff are attuned to the subtle clues that tell them how children are feeling. Staff are able to recognise if a child is unhappy or uncomfortable. This means that children feel cared for. Staff create opportunities for the children to make day-to-day choices and decisions. However, there is no recording system to capture this or to show when a child wants to make a complaint. This is a missed opportunity to capture the views of children. This shortfall was highlighted at the last inspection and has not been addressed.

The safety of children

Parents and social workers said they were happy that the children are kept safe in the home. Parents are consulted about how to provide safe care for their children. Consequently, the staff hold a good understanding of the children's vulnerabilities and strengths. Careful planning ensures that the children enjoy themselves in a safe environment.

The registered manager has a clear expectation about how staff managed children's behaviours. Capable staff are effective at using encouragement, positive choices and humour, to promote positive behaviours. Staff are nurturing and playful with the children and do not use sanctions.

Children respond well to the consistency and stability which the staff provide. Staff put in place strategies that reduce behaviours that may pose risks. As a result, physical intervention is seldom used.

Staff welcome new children to the home in a thoughtful and sensitive way. For one child, this approach has helped him to sleep, for the first time, in a bed that is not his own. At the last inspection, a requirement was made to ensure that the daily records reflect the care that the children receive. This information is recorded in the children's communication books, which are held between the home and the families. If the books get lost, then the children lose this information. This means that a permanent record of the children's care is still not kept at the home. Therefore, this is not available for future reference. This remains a repeat requirement.

Leaders and managers

The changes in the home's management and staffing have contributed to a period of instability within the team. Shortfalls in practice, addressed by the manager, led to some staff leaving the home. Staff, parents and professionals spoke favourably about the positive changes the registered manager has achieved. Staff morale has improved, and the relatively new team is forming well.

The registered manager has focussed his attention on care practice for children during the COVID-19 restrictions. This has meant that some management monitoring and administration processes have not received the necessary attention. For example, managers have not provided the staff with regular supervision. So, it is not clear if the staff have had enough support to help them to meet the needs of the children. Furthermore, there has been insufficient documentation of performance management and follow-up actions when shortfalls in practice have been identified. This shortfall was identified at the last inspection and has not been fully addressed.

The manager's system for monitoring staff training is ineffective. Records are not kept up to date and show that some staff have not completed mandatory training within the expected timescales. Consequently, the registered manager cannot be confident that the staff team has the necessary skills to meet the specific needs of the children.

The registered manager has not ensured external monthly monitoring reports have been sent by the independent visitor to Ofsted within the required timescales. The reports do not routinely include the registered manager evaluation or comment. This limits Ofsted's and the placing authority's ability to form a view on the home's ability to safeguard and promote children's welfare.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
Case records must be kept— securely in the children's home during the period when the child to whom the case records relate is accommodated there; and in a secure place after the child has ceased to be accommodated in the home. (Regulation 36 (2)(c)(d)) Repeat requirement	20 December 2020
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(g)(h)) This particularly refers to ensuring that the manager has an up-to-date system for monitoring staff training and that staff have completed the organisation's required training within the expected timescale.	1 February 2021

The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b)(c)) In particular, staff supervision must take place on a regular basis.	20 December 2020
The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person's report to— (7) The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person's report to— (a) HMCI; (b) upon request, the local authority for the area in which the home is located; (c) the placing authorities of children; (d) the registered provider and, if applicable, the registered manager; and (e) the responsible individual (if one is nominated). (a) HMCI; (Regulation 44 (7)(a)) In particular, the registered manager must ensure a copy of the report is sent to Ofsted.	20 December 2020

Recommendations

- Children must be consulted regularly on their views about the home's care, to inform and support continued improvement in the quality of care provided. Due consideration should be given to the child's cognitive ability in the development and implementation of any consultation processes. Children should be able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted upon. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 23, paragraph 4.11)

In particular, staff should have a system that demonstrates that they recognise and respond to the children's complaints or concerns.
Repeat recommendation.

- As set out in regulations 31-33, the registered person is responsible for maintaining good employment practice. They must ensure that recruitment, supervision and performance management of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

In particular, ensure that there is sufficient emphasis in staff supervision on performance management and follow-up actions when shortfalls in practice are identified.

- 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. Children's homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene etc.); however, in doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

In particular, ensure that the home is maintained in a timely manner.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC013828

Registered provider: White Lodge Centre

Registered provider address: White Lodge, Holloway Hill, Lyne, Chertsey, Surrey KT16 0FA

Responsible individual: Lesley Jones

Registered manager: Jonathan Mack

Inspectors

Anne-Marie Davies, Social Care Inspector
Matthew Nicholls, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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