

SC020193

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This home is a residential school for up to 25 children, aged eight to 19 years, who have severe learning disabilities/autistic spectrum disorder, and display associated challenging behaviour.

The home has a full-time registered manager who is suitably experienced and qualified.

Visit dates: 27 to 28 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 21 January 2020

Previous inspection judgement: Improved 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

Staff are trained, experienced and understand the needs of the children they support. As a result, children make significant progress, particularly in relation to their behaviour, emotional well-being and independence. One parent said, 'Moving to this home is the best thing that could have happened to [my child].'

The home has had a significant amount of maintenance work carried out. Redecorating and modernising a number of areas has made the environment homelier. Children's bedrooms are personalised and reflect their interests. Staff have been working closely with occupational therapists and a range of professionals to support one child to overcome sensory issues. This has been an example of staff being creative in their approach, ensuring that the needs of the child remain paramount throughout.

Children's health is promoted, and staff encourage healthy eating and exercise. A social worker said that a child had been supported to achieve a healthier weight while he has been at the home. One parent said, 'My son was previously overweight, but he isn't now. He is more energetic and is more independent.'

Children are supported to remain in contact with those who are important to them. During the COVID-19 pandemic, staff were creative, ensuring that the restrictions in place did not form barriers to communication, enabling children to remain in contact with their families and others.

Staff work in partnership with parents, social workers and external agencies. Staff have positive relationships with the children. They apply consistent routines and structure, and nurture the children, supporting them to thrive. This helps children to make significant progress.

The safety of children

Parents and professionals speak highly of the ability of staff to keep children safe. Staff have completed safeguarding training and are competent in their knowledge around the home's safeguarding policies and procedures. All safeguarding concerns are referred to the appropriate agencies and are thoroughly investigated. Effective action is taken to ensure that children are kept safe.

Children do not go missing, however, staff understand the procedures to follow should an incident occur. The home has comprehensive risk-management plans for children. These accurately describe the risks associated for each child and these plans are reviewed regularly.

Staff have completed physical intervention training. However, physical intervention is only used as a last resort. One child has experienced a significant reduction in the need to be physically restrained since moving to this home.

Staff work with external professionals effectively in addressing the needs of children who self-harm and/or display challenging behaviour. This multi-agency work helps to identify positive strategies to keep children safe.

Leaders and managers

The registered manager is experienced and qualified. She provides good leadership and management for the home. Staff spoke positively about the changes she has implemented. A member of staff said, 'I feel more supported. There has been a massive difference since she took over. The team like her and they know that they can speak to her. She's so approachable.'

There is a cohesive staff team. Overall, they provide consistent care for children. This was evident during the COVID-19 pandemic as the home was appropriately staffed and the safety of all was maintained.

Staff retention has been a struggle. Despite these changes, children have continued to make progress. Staff retention has started to improve since the appointment of the manager and since a recruitment plan was established.

Staff have engaged in a range of training, including child-specific training. Staff have received training in preparation for a child moving in, to ensure that they are trained to meet her needs from the outset.

Staff receive regular supervision, although this is task-focused rather than being reflective and child centred. Some learning opportunities have been missed as a result of this supervision style.

The manager is passionate about her work and is a strong advocate for children. A local authority wanted to move a child against the wishes of their family. The manager did not believe that this move was in the child's best interests and addressed this with the child's advocate. The manager worked in partnership with the family and other agencies. As a result, the child has remained, which was a positive outcome for the child and her family.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person must have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care.
(Guide to Children's homes regulations including the quality standards, Page 61, 13.2)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC020193

Registered provider: The SENAD Group Limited

Registered provider address: SENAD Group Ltd, 1 St Georges House, Vernon Gate, Derby DE1 1UQ

Responsible individual: Mark Flynn

Registered manager: Kelly Watson

Inspectors

Joanne Vyas, Social Care Inspector
Zoey Lee, Social Care Inspector

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