

SC035241

# Assurance visit

## Information about this children's home

This home is part of a charitable trust. The home is registered to accommodate up to nine children who have a sensory impairment. The home operates as one home, but with two accommodation provisions. Six children can live in Dickson House and three children in the North Flat. The home provides planned care on a 52-week basis, 38-week educational residential placements, and respite care for children who attend the trust's school. The registered manager is experienced and appropriately qualified. She has been the home's manager since 2011.

**Visit dates:** 29 to 30 September 2020

**Previous inspection date:** 12 February 2019

**Previous inspection judgement:** Outstanding

## 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**

The children state that they are well cared for. Children form concrete and meaningful relationships with staff and peers within the home. As most children returned home to their families during the pandemic, staff held regular video calls to help maintain relationships. Children were supported to use these opportunities to share any concerns and express their wishes and feelings.

Children who continued to live at the home during the COVID-19 lockdown, were supported to use video calls to stay connected with their family and friends. As restrictions ease, the staff help the children to address their anxieties and to re-establish links with friends in the community.

Children are cared for by staff who advocate for deaf culture and help the children through any challenges. Living in the home means children are not isolated. One child said, 'I now have friends because I am around people that understand me.'

The effective use of technology has supported the children and staff to maintain regular communication with health professionals. Video consultations replaced face-to-face meetings during the lockdown period. As the restrictions have eased, the staff support the children to attend health appointments and routine dental and optician appointments.

### **The safety of children**

The children live in a very calm and settled home environment. The staff manage the children's behaviour well by setting clear and consistent boundaries and quickly resolving disagreements between children.

Children engage well with the government guidance, and they are regularly praised by the staff for their commitment to keeping everyone safe. Staff promote good hygiene and social distancing and provide good role modelling for the children. Staff created a leaflet for the children which provides a clear reference guide in terms of COVID-19.

Staff help the children to understand their risks and vulnerabilities. Staff follow children's individualised safety plans to safeguard children. Regular discussions between the staff and the children support children's learning about pertinent risks, such as social media. Children have access to specialist support groups to help them develop coping strategies and to meet like-minded people dealing with similar issues.

## Leaders and managers

Throughout the pandemic, the manager has placed the well-being and safety of the children and her staff at the forefront of her decision-making. Care practices have been adapted to adhere to COVID-19 restrictions, but the manager ensures they remain child-focused.

Partnership working is a strength, and good relationships between the staff and partner agencies continue to benefit the children. When children returned to their families at the start of COVID-19 lockdown, this was done in agreement with all partner agencies. This collaboration allows for clear plans of support to be implemented for children and their families.

Staff benefit from regular supervision. This provides the staff with the opportunity to focus on the quality of their practice and access personal support. Staff continue to access training to strengthen their skills and knowledge and to help them within their role.

The manager and deputy manager have effective monitoring systems to review and evaluate the quality of care provided to children. The independent visitor routinely highlights in their reports how the staff provide the children with high-quality care and how this comes from clear oversight and direction from the manager.

All the requirements and recommendations raised at the last inspection have been met.

## Children's home details

**Unique reference number:** SC035241

**Registered provider:** Doncaster Deaf Trust

**Registered provider address:** Doncaster College for the Deaf, Leger Way, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN2 6AY

**Responsible individual:** Alexis Johnson

**Registered manager:** Catherine Warner

## Inspector

Jennifer Fenlon, Social Care Inspector

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