

SC408655

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This children's home is operated by a large national provider. It provides accommodation and support for up to seven children who may have a learning difficulty and/or have an autism spectrum disorder.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since 30 January 2019.

Visit dates: 15 to 16 December 2020

Previous inspection date: 11 June 2019

Previous inspection judgement: Good

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 are settled and comfortable in the home and content with the staff who look after them. Children make progress through the warm and nurturing relationships that they have with staff. Children approach staff for help as well as for company and interaction. Staff, including those recently recruited, are confident in their approach to care. Parents and social workers are complimentary about the service and how well children make progress and develop their skills.

Children's views are sought in a variety of ways, depending on their communication style. Children are enabled to make choices throughout the day, such as what they want to drink and the activities that they do.

Children attend the organisation's school, which is a short car ride away. Staff prepare for children's return from school with individual schedules and activities, such as art and crafts or going for a walk. Children benefit from a consistent, individualised approach to learning skills, such as making snacks or drinks. Staff communicate their expectations using their communication strips where needed.

Staff are supporting children well through the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic. They are thoughtful in their approaches to managing the change in children's routines. The use of social stories helps children to understand these changes, and to learn new routines. Children remain in contact with family through video calls, when they have not been able to meet up with them face to face.

The safety of children

Children's actions and demeanours show that they feel safe in the home. They relax in communal spaces and are able to share where needed. Staff are acutely aware of each child's risks and vulnerabilities and they take the right actions to keep them safe. Staff are confident and understand the processes that they need to follow should they be worried for a child's safety or welfare.

Responses to child protection and safeguarding concerns are swift, and joint working with partner agencies is strong. Staff have implemented processes and systems as a result of concerns. For example, they have set an alarm to ensure that medication is administered at the time prescribed. The use of reactive and responsive supervision allows for staff learning after concerns are identified. However, on one occasion, Ofsted were not informed of a safeguarding concern where a child could have come to physical harm.

Staff are skilled in understanding what children are communicating through their behaviour, and, where necessary, they help them to express their feelings in more socially appropriate ways. Joint working with child and adolescent mental health services and therapy teams at school ensures consistent approaches to understanding

and meeting children's needs. Records are clear on children's debriefs after incidents, and staff use a variety of methods to help children understand and learn. These methods include using pictorial discussions, social stories and children drawing pictures.

The building is well maintained and reflects the different needs of the children who access the service. There are plans to continue making better use of the outside space and for maintaining areas of the home that are used most.

Leaders and managers

The home is managed effectively by an experienced registered manager. Staff express confidence in the skills and support of the management team, and they say that they can contact members of the team at any time. Staff benefit from regular supervisions and have continued training throughout the periods of COVID-19 restrictions. New staff talk positively about how supportive the staff team is and how helpful the induction has been.

The management team maintains effective relationships with partner agencies, and challenges them, when necessary, if they feel actions and plans are not in the child's best interests.

Children's plans identify goals and targets and the progress that children make. The team is justifiably proud that children have made significant progress in different areas since they have been placed in the home. Risk assessments are regularly updated to reflect any development or changes in children's needs.

The management team effectively monitors the quality of care and children's progress through continuous evaluation of the service. The development plan is clear and builds year on year to evaluate how effective previous actions have been. Managers welcome and respond to the areas of development identified by the independent visitor. The management team has ensured that all the requirements and recommendations from the last inspection have been met.

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

Recommendations

- Regulation 40(4) requires the registered person to notify Ofsted and other relevant persons if one of the situations specified in regulation 40(4)(a)-(d) occurs, or if there is an incident relating to the protection, safeguarding or welfare of a child living in the home which the registered person considers to be serious (40(4)(e)). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', paragraph 14.10 page 63)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC408655

Registered provider: Priory Education Services Limited

Registered provider address: Priory Group, 80 Hammersmith Road, London W14 8UD

Responsible individual: Hannah Cox

Registered manager: Tracey Beales

Inspector

Jennie Christopher, Social Care Inspector

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