

SC413678

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

A private company owns the home. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two children or young people with emotional, behavioural and/or learning difficulties. The registered provider also runs a school that the children can attend. The current manager joined the home in January 2020 and was registered on 29 April 2020.

Visit dates: 20 to 21 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 17 September 2019

Previous inspection judgement: Requires improvement to be 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

Staff provide supportive, nurturing care, which helps the young people to feel secure in their surroundings. The home is comfortable, and the atmosphere is warm and welcoming. Young people have plenty of board and electronic games to enjoy in their own room or with others. This means that staff have been able to engage in activities with the young people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Young people reported that they are happy and make progress. This is because staff build strong, close relationships, and young people place trust in staff. This results in relationships where young people feel able to talk over their worries and concerns.

Staff support the young people to develop life skills. They do this by having 'bake offs' and 'cook offs' to learn skills in a fun way. Staff discuss practical things with young people, such as how to change a fuse, or who to call when a boiler breaks. This helps to prepare the young people to move to more independent living.

Staff work with young people to make plans for their future. For example, staff help the young people to research job vacancies, complete application forms and talk about employers' expectations. Plans for moving on are carefully explored and done a long time in advance. This means that staff have time to thoroughly consider with the young people the impact of any transition.

Staff listen to the young people's views, which directly influence the care they receive. A holiday for one young person was cancelled when they decided they did not want to go. Instead, staff arranged alternative preferred activities like shopping trips, meals out and looking for shooting stars.

One young person has not attended school for four years. Home tutoring has not always been an effective substitute. Recently, agencies have worked together to identify a school place. The plan to introduce the young person back into school is now established. Despite this, there have been significant shortcomings by multiple agencies up to this point. This could have an impact on the young person's longer-term achievements. There is also no contingency plan, should the move into a school not be achieved.

The safety of children

Due to the pandemic, staff and young people follow government guidance on social contact and hygiene routines. Staff work alongside the police to educate the young people about the virus. Staff also take extra precautions to keep the home clean and limit visitors to the site. All these measures help to better protect the staff and young people.

Staff understand the risks posed to the individual young people. They keep records up to date and have clear plans and strategies to reduce risks. Staff are trained to recognise when a young person is at risk and follow safeguarding procedures. Staff

talk to the young people to teach them ways to keep themselves safer; for example, they encourage more caution online.

Staff support young people to change their behaviour if it is harmful to them or others. They work with other agencies to increase young people's understanding of issues like substance misuse and relationship problems. This has helped young people to form and sustain positive attachments and misuse substances less.

Young people are settled in the home and share their worries with staff. This has contributed to a significant reduction in episodes of young people going missing from the home. This rarely happens now. When it does, staff know what to do to try to achieve the safe return of the young people. Staff work with the police to ensure that this happens as quickly as possible.

Leaders and managers

There are two managers in the home, one of whom is registered with Ofsted. The managers work closely together to deliver strong and effective management. Managers are constantly looking for ways to improve practice. They are currently introducing person-centred planning. Staff will be trained to understand and implement this development.

Staff receive regular training, and managers have been creative in the delivery of face-to-face training, supervision and team meetings during the pandemic. Managers also recognise that individual members of staff need extra training. They deliver this through targeted support and bespoke workshops. An example of this is training for some staff on more effective recording.

Managers take a firm position on young people moving into the home and robustly consider the impact on the young people already living there. Managers have a good understanding of what difficulties may arise if plans to introduce new young people are not effective or are incomplete. They have a plan in place to increase staffing, should the number of young people in the home increase.

Managers have introduced systems and taken measures to meet the previous requirements. The improvement in the practice of staff and the presentation of the home is clear. The positive impact this has had on the young people and their relationship with staff is also evident. One young person said, 'I don't loiter around town anymore. I spend more time around the home.'

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

Recommendations

- Children's home staff should act as effective advocates for or on behalf of a child who may be experiencing difficulties with education or training matters including, but not limited to, attainment, admissions, attendance or behaviour, as a good

parent would do. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.12)

- Where children placed in a home are not participating in education because they have been excluded or are not on a school roll for some other reason, the registered person and staff must work closely with the placing authority so that the child is supported and enabled to resume full-time education as soon as possible. In the interim, the child should be supported to sustain or regain their confidence in education and be engaged in suitable structured activities. If no education place is identified by the placing authority, the registered person must challenge them to meet the child's needs under regulation 5 (engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.15)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC413678

Registered provider: Horton Establishments Ltd

Registered provider address: 372 Chanterlands Avenue, Hull, Yorkshire HU5 4ED

Responsible individual: Eka Fallon

Registered manager: Mary Smith

Inspectors

Rachel Ruth, Social Care Inspector

Cath Sikakana, Social Care Inspector

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