

# 1250521

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

The home, catering for up to four children, is part of a group and opened in May 2017. Following unplanned changes in management and staffing it was made inoperative in October 2017 and reopened 17 weeks later, in January 2018. A further change in management took place in March 2018, leading to the current management arrangements.

**Inspection dates:** 23 to 24 May 2018

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account** requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers requires improvement to be good

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

**Date of last inspection:** 15 August 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** requires improvement to be good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/08/2017	Full	Requires improvement to be good

## 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.

Requirements	Due date
<p>The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff—</p> <p>help each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans;</p> <p>support each child's learning and development, including helping the child to develop independent study skills and, where appropriate, helping the child to complete independent study;</p> <p>understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers;</p> <p>help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment;</p> <p>promote opportunities for each child to learn informally;</p> <p>help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as</p>	15/07/18

<p>possible;</p> <p>help each child who is above compulsory school age to participate in further education, training or employment and to prepare for future care, education or employment; and</p> <p>that each child has access to appropriate equipment, facilities and resources to support the child's learning. (Regulation 8(1)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(viii)(ix)(b))</p>	
<p>The care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and</p> <p>have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that arrangements are in place to—</p> <p>ensure the effective induction of each child into the home;</p> <p>manage and review the placement of each child in the home; (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(i)(ii))</p> <p>In particular, that plans of care are clear, accessible and firmly focused on the key areas of need and risk.</p>	15/07/18
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child;</p> <p>help each child to understand how to keep safe. (Regulation 12 (1)(2)(a)(i)(ii))</p>	15/07/18
<p>In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff—</p> <p>seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans;</p>	15/07/18

<p>seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs;</p> <p>if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans; and</p> <p>seek to develop and maintain effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children's home is to provide care and accommodation. (Regulation 5 (a)(b)(c)(d))</p>	
<p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(f))</p> <p>In particular, to set out a clear plan about how the quality of care will be improved and developed.</p>	<p>15/07/18</p>

## Recommendations

- That the registered person should only accept placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs as recorded in the child's relevant plans and where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)  
In particular, gather sufficient pre-placement information to be able to make an informed decision about each admission.

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good**

Since the home re-opened in January there has been a further change of manager and of management style. This has been destabilising for those children present at the time of the change, but is now settling down.

The children have, however, benefited from the most recent change in leadership of the home, together with a more settled and cohesive staff team. This change is, however, recent and has only taken place over the past three months. Further improvements to the quality of care are required and the areas of practice that have already improved need to become embedded.

The children are beginning to develop a sense of belonging in the home, and their trust in the adults who care for them is growing. Clearer structure in the home and more consistency in the application of boundaries, as well as genuine warmth and interest shown by staff, help the children to feel safe and valued. They also feel more able to express their wishes and feelings.

The children who are enrolled in education engage in their learning and make progress. Efforts to escalate concerns effectively for those without educational provision are, however, insufficient. Interim education arrangements for these children are also lacking in urgency, structure and purpose, and important opportunities for learning are being missed.

Plans for the care and progress of the children are unclear and the templates used to guide staff in consistently focusing on key areas of the children's needs are ineffective. This means that the children do not make best progress in the most important areas.

The children benefit from living in a suitable and comfortable building located in spacious grounds.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good**

The re-opening of the home in January was effected by the new staff team having limited preparation time. This may have contributed to the difficulties experienced in the early placements. This has particularly been the case for those who have been moved on as a result of the home being unable to ensure their safety and well-being and also because of how their actions have affected others.

The practice in assessing the risks and needs associated with the children before they move in has been highly variable. Some children have moved in before key information, such as medication requirements and family contact arrangements, has been provided. The particular needs of those coming directly from secure environments have not been sufficiently explored in advance of admission.

More recently, however, there has been a significant improvement in managing new referrals. This includes improvement in the process of evaluating the likely impact of the risks and needs of new children on those already in the home.

The identified risks associated with each child are practically managed, for example by securing controls over internet usage when on the homes computer. However, work to help children increase their resilience and understanding of risk has yet to take place.

The change of leadership and approach in the home have contributed to staff feeling unsure about how best to provide appropriate structure for the children and when to apply restrictive physical interventions. This may have added to children's feelings of uncertainty and insecurity and their subsequent need to test limits and seek structure. This has led to a high number of recorded incidents in the home and an elevated need for restrictive physical measures.

Stronger and more supportive leadership in recent months has made the staff feel more confident in their roles and clearer in their practice. The children feel more secure and reassured by the improved structure and routine in the home and the need for restrictive physical interventions has decreased substantially.

All current staff are trained in mandatory safeguarding practice as well as the specialist areas of internet safety, the 'Prevent' duty and exploitation. Regular health and safety checks are undertaken and a sound approach to fire safety helps to protect the children from environmental hazards.

The staff team has an adequate understanding of the home's locality and this guides them in keeping the children safe when they leave the home. When children leave without authorisation, the staff response is urgent and coordinated with other agencies. Efforts are sustained until children are located and safeguarded. Review practices when children return home are sound and in accordance with statutory guidance.

## **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement**

Following registration of the home, leaders of the wider organisation failed to provide the children with stable and consistent care. In response to this senior leaders temporarily closed the home between September 2017 and January 2018. On reopening a new manager was in place, but he too moved on in March and this led to further change for those young people present.

The children and the staff team have, however, become more settled since the appointment of an experienced manager in March 2018. Staff team-working and motivation have improved and the children have responded to this by showing signs of an increased sense of belonging and security.

The manager and the diverse staff team share an aspiration for the home to provide a quality of care that will ensure that the children who live there have the best chance to develop and achieve their full potential.

The children have clearly benefited from the manager's initial prioritisation of bringing stability, continuity and structure to their care. The wider vision for the home has, however, not yet been translated into a clear, targeted and prioritised plan. The quality of care planning and systems for reliably monitoring the progress of the children also require further improvement.

Some admission decisions have not been underpinned by sufficient planning of information and this has contributed, for one child, to a prolonged period out of statutory education.

The staff team needs to continue to develop systems that will reliably and consistently enable it to ascertain the wishes and feelings of the children, and when appropriate engage them in activities that will contribute to improvements in the quality of their care.

Regular staff supervision and team meetings in recent months, both with better structure and quality, have contributed to improved staff cohesiveness and team working. There have also been no staff losses since the appointment of the current manager. These factors have helped to provide a more consistent and stable environment for the children.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home

knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

## Children's home details

**Unique reference number:** 1250521

**Provision sub-type:** children's home

**Registered provider:** Acorn Homes (UK) Ltd

**Registered provider address:** 424 Margate Road, Ramsgate CT12 6SJ

**Responsible individual:** David Knowles

**Registered manager:** post vacant

### Inspector:

John Pledger, social care inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
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