

1183936

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a privately run children's home that is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to six children and young people. The children and young people will often have suffered abuse or neglect and may also display challenging behaviour. Placements are generally medium- to long-term.

The registered manager has been registered since March 2018.

Inspection dates: 1 to 2 May 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers good

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 24 May 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/05/2017	Full	Good
06/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
09/11/2016	Full	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 registered person must maintain records (“case records”) for each child which—</p> <p>include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child;</p> <p>are kept up to date; and</p> <p>are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c))</p>	30/10/2018
<p>Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children’s home.</p> <p>The registered person must—</p> <p>maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4; (Regulation 37 (1)(2)(a))</p> <p>Fire Drills</p> <p>A record of every fire drill or fire alarm test conducted, with details of any deficiency in the procedure.</p> <p>(Schedule 4 (6))</p>	30/10/2018
<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>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that the home’s workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(2)(e))</p> <p>This particularly relates to staff reading and signing team meeting records when they have been unable to attend.</p>	30/10/2018

Recommendations

- Staff must help each child to prepare for any moves from the home, whether they are returning home, moving to another placement or adult care, or to live independently ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.27). In particular, this includes where the child is moving to live independently, a formal programme to develop practical skills such as cooking, housework, budgeting and personal self-care.
- Measurements of progress should include qualitative information ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 26, paragraph 5.2). In particular, this includes systems to identify children's targets and monitor progress.
- When a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of the information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30). In particular, staff must ensure that all young people's return home interview records are sent to the home.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people are happy and safe in their home. The well-maintained and homely living environment benefits from high-quality furnishings and decoration. Young people's bedrooms are personalised to reflect their individuality. Young people value their home and develop good relationships with the staff team whose members know them well. A young person said, 'You are all like my family in this house.'

Young people enjoy a wide range of activities suited to their individual preferences. During the inspection, evidence was seen of recent choices that young people had made, including going to the gym, kayaking, trampolining, horse riding, bowling and fishing. Additional financial incentives, encouraging positive behaviour and school attendance, enable young people to save for their own choice of reward, examples include a scooter or jewellery.

Young people have opportunities to share their views on the quality of care that they receive and the daily routines of the home. A 'Monday night' takeaway meal choice incentivises young people to attend their weekly house meeting. Where appropriate, young people are successfully encouraged to chair their meeting and encourage discussion on issues that may affect them, such as bullying, going missing from care and respect. This enhances young people's confidence alongside their understanding of the

home's rules.

Staff help young people to acquire some independent living skills such as cooking and cleaning. However, there are no individualised independence training programmes in place. As a result, staff cannot be sure that young people are fully prepared to move on to independent living.

Staff have high aspirations for the young people in the home and they make progress. Examples include improved confidence to attend health appointments, reduction in going missing from care episodes, alongside improved personal hygiene and reduction in substance misuse. However, the monitoring systems that are in place to track young people's targets and progress are unclear. This limits staff's understanding of young people's achievements and continued development.

The home ensures that young people are supported in their education. Young people who are waiting for a school placement either receive formal tutoring or they engage in timetabled educational activities in the home. Disabling the home's internet access during school hours incentivises young people's engagement in education.

When no educational provision is provided, the registered manager proactively challenges placing authorities and the virtual school head. This is crucial to ensure that there is no delay in young people accessing formal education provision.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Young people said that they understand the rules and boundaries in the home. Staff are guided to provide consistent care and support by positive behaviour support plans that encourage young people's self-regulation, positive engagement and reflection. The temporary loss of internet access or a reduction in financial incentives are usually effective sanctions. Since the last inspection, staff's need to use physical intervention has significantly reduced.

Staff help young people to understand their risks and vulnerabilities. Staff identify young people's potential risks and produce risk reduction plans that are detailed and effective. Young people benefit from structured key-work sessions addressing their individual risks and how to stay safe. However, while risk assessments are regularly reviewed, the author does not always date and sign the record.

When young people are missing from home, staff follow the home's missing policies and procedures. Young people regularly receive return home interviews, but at present staff do not receive a record of these interviews. As a result, staff do not have comprehensive details of young people's episodes of going missing which limits their ability to learn from incidents or update plans.

The registered manager considers each new referral in detail, taking account of the impact on the young people already living in the home and the steps needed to reduce any impact. Staff's input to referral and admission decisions is encouraged, which further enhances placement matching. Where possible, young people visit the home prior to arrival, helping a smooth transition, while celebrations and parties are held for young people who move on.

The home provides a safe environment for young people. Staff recruitment practice is

robust and prevents unsuitable people working in the home. Interviews take place in the home, and young people take part in informal interviews with potential new staff. This enhances young people's sense of ownership.

All staff receive training in child protection and safeguarding vulnerable young people. All certificates for fire and health and safety checks are current and reviewed in line with relevant guidance. However, a record of the home's monthly fire drill was not complete which raises the risk that not all young people are familiar with the procedures should an emergency occur.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Since the last inspection, a new registered manager has been appointed who is ambitious for the home and the young people. The majority of the requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection have been met.

The staff team has undergone some restructuring, but this has not affected the consistency of care. There are sufficient numbers of permanent staff in the home who describe feeling very well supported by the approachable manager. Monthly staff team meetings provide opportunities to embed good practice and share young people's updates. However, when staff are unable to attend, there is no consistent record that they have read the meeting records and that they are up to date with events in the home.

Staff receive training that is comprehensive and all staff are either qualified to the appropriate level 3 qualification, are currently undertaking the course or are new to the home and will enrol on the course once their probation is completed. This means that young people receive support from suitably qualified staff. A parent described the staff team as, 'Hard working, supportive and patient.'

Staff work effectively with a number of agencies, including substance misuse agencies, education providers, the police and parents. The registered manager and staff team are strong advocates for young people in the home. Challenging placing authorities in relation to delayed school placements or unsuitable moving on plans are at the heart of the home's child-centred practice.

The management team is well supported and appropriately scrutinised by the independent visitor's thorough monthly visits to the home. This is well supplemented by the registered manager's six-monthly quality of care reviews. However, in-house quality assurance and monitoring are not consistent across all of the records kept in the home.

The registered manager is aware of the home's strengths and weaknesses and has a clear plan to address the shortfalls.

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: 1183936

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Limited

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

Responsible individual: David Knowles

Registered manager: Coleen Ashman

Inspector

Victoria Jones: social care inspector

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