

SC416915

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is operated by a private company which has other homes in the area. It is registered to accommodate up to seven children who display challenging behaviour and experience difficulties in forming and sustaining relationships. The company also has a school which children may attend.

The home has a registered manager who has been in post since 2014.

Inspection dates: 29 to 30 August 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: 20 June 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/06/2017	Full	Good
22/02/2017	Full	Good
06/10/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
01/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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.

Requirement	Due date
<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 children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home’s statement of purpose. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that all relevant information about children’s needs, and the associated risks, is obtained before a decision about admission is made.</p>	<p>30/11/2018</p>

Recommendations

- Staff should be familiar with the home’s policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person should ensure that children are provided with nutritious meals suitable for each child’s needs. Where appropriate, children should be involved in choosing and preparing meals and opportunities to sit together and eat should be promoted. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 15, paragraph 3.8)
- For children’s homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the

needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. Children's homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene etc.); however, in doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

In particular, the home's furnishings and decor should reflect the lives of those who live there.

- Regulation 5 sets out overarching requirements that run across all of the Quality Standards. To meet the aspirations embodied in the Quality Standards, children's homes need to connect with and be part of the wider support system for each child in their care. No children's home will be able to meet, on its own, all of a child's needs. It is crucial that the home works in close partnership with all those who play a role in protecting and caring for the child, but particularly the child's local authority and statutory social worker. The registered person and the staff of the home cannot force a relevant person to engage or work productively with them and the regulation does not require this. The registered person should evidence what they have done to achieve engagement, including any actions taken to escalate concerns. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 11, paragraph 2.3)

In particular, the registered person must ensure that staff understand the roles and responsibilities of the local authority and the statutory social worker.

- Where the placing authority or another relevant person does not provide the input and services needed to meet a child's needs during their time in the home or in preparation for leaving the home, the home must challenge them to meet the child's needs (see regulations 5(c)). Staff should act as champions for their children, expecting nothing less than a good parent would. The registered person should consider the use of an independent advocate (see paragraph 4.16) if the child's needs are not being met. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 12, paragraph 2.8)

In particular, the registered person must ensure that staff know how to effectively challenge local authorities and how to escalate concerns.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The positive and welcoming ethos of the home helps children who move in to settle quickly and to develop a sense of belonging. Staff are confident in their ability to meet the needs of the children and to manage any associated risks. This has sometimes led to a laxity in information gathering and assessment of needs before children move in. Leaders and managers need to add rigour to systems and practice, to ensure that all relevant information on children is gathered and properly considered before they move in.

The positive engagement of children in their education is championed by the staff. Every effort is made to ensure that the children get the education that they deserve and that is best for them. The children's progress in education is supported by staff, who keep in close contact with children's teachers and are informed about children's performance and application in the classroom.

Children who have few interests, and who are dependent on computer games for their recreation, are supported and encouraged to expand their experience of the world. However, currently, these efforts are meeting with limited success and the home needs to develop new and effective strategies to achieve this aspiration.

Warm interactions between staff and the children and positive relationships are a feature of the home. This is the mainstay of children developing their sense of belonging. The common areas of the home are lacking in visible evidence of the children who live there, such as their interests, activities and achievements. There is no appropriate social hub in the home and no established culture of regular shared meals. These features of the home are not contributing as they should to the children's sense of belonging and attachment.

The staff team is meticulous in ensuring that the children access all the health services available to them, as well as specialist services when required. Children's physical and mental well-being is supported by the organisation's in-house nursing team. Current recording does not allow staff to be sure that the children's nutritional needs are being met and that children are expanding their repertoire of healthy eating.

The children maintain, develop and strengthen their family ties because of the staff team's willingness and motivation to support and promote contact arrangements.

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

A vigilant and well-informed staff team, whose members are strongly focused on the safety and well-being of the children, keeps children safe and helps children to feel secure. A well-organised and maintained home environment, in which staff understand their roles and responsibilities, provides the children with a stable and safe place to live. Placing social workers express confidence in the staff team's ability to consistently provide their children with a good quality of care.

The standards for the safe recruitment of staff are high, and effectively protect the children from those not suited to provide their care. The children are actively involved in identifying new staff with whom they feel comfortable; they choose their key workers and quickly develop positive relationships with staff. This helps the children to establish a stable base from which to tackle their difficulties and to make progress.

Positive engagement between children and staff, together with the staff's knowledge and understanding of the children, keeps the need for physical interventions very low. On those increasingly rare occasions, staff's actions are in keeping with the actual risks of

harm. The response of staff to children going missing is urgent and sustained until they are located or safeguarded; return home procedures are followed.

Sometimes, local authority plans and decisions are deemed by the home as not being sufficiently considered, with the potential to undermine the progress and well-being that children have achieved. The manager and staff team need to develop a clearer understanding of their advocacy role for children and increase their effectiveness in addressing these situations.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The success of the home in achieving good outcomes for children rests on the strong leadership of an experienced manager and a small, cohesive staff team that is keenly focused on the progress and well-being of the children. Staff are confident in the registered manager and they feel valued. They said that this helps them to keep focused and motivated to provide consistently good care for the children.

Regular and meaningful staff meetings and supervision also contribute significantly to sustaining the efforts of staff to support the progress and well-being of the children. The manager is supported by an able deputy and the senior leadership team.

A primary focus on the needs, risks and well-being of the children runs through all aspects of the home's operation. Staff are committed to providing continuity of care to the children and support each other in this purpose; staff absence is unusually low.

Although meeting the requirements, the home's statement of purpose does not adequately describe the practice ethos that has been developed and established in the home. Staff know what they do but know less about how and why their practice contributes to good outcomes for children. This impedes the effective induction of new staff as well as limiting the professional development of staff.

The collective strengths of the staff team members have led to a tendency by the home to sometimes assume some of the roles and responsibilities of external agencies in promoting the progress of the children. This is not always in the best interests of children, and leaders and managers need to improve their understanding of other agencies' responsibilities and statutory duties and how to effectively address concerns in this regard when it affects the progress and well-being of 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: SC416915

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: Tania Smith

Inspector:

John Pledger: social care inspector

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