

1256417

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is the first inspection of this newly registered children's home that caters for up to five children and young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 14 to 15 February 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: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- The young people's needs and progress occupy the core of the staff team's focus and effort.
- The staff team displays a detailed and comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the young people and uses this to support the young people's safety and progress.

- The young people settle quickly and make significant progress in key areas, and develop a sense of belonging in the home and attachment to the adults who care for them.
- The leadership team demonstrates a firm grip on the key operational aspects of the home and displays a hunger for improvement, innovation and ways to objectively reflect the progress of the young people.
- The high-quality physical environment of the home reflects the thoughtful respect and value afforded to the young people who live there.

The children’s home’s areas for development:

- Procedures for considering new referrals to the home need to be refined and strengthened.
- Care planning systems need to be reviewed and made more coherent and effective in guiding staff to facilitate the young people’s progress.
- Arrangements for staff supervision need to be clarified; staff probationary periods and the outcomes need to be recorded.

Recent inspection history

Not applicable

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
33. The registered person must ensure that each permanent appointment of an employee is subject to the satisfactory completion of a period of probation. (Regulation 33 (1)(b)) In particular, demonstrate this in a record of the period of probation.	15/05/2018

Recommendations

- The registered person must ensure that that when considering new placements to the home, the needs of the young person and how these may impact on the

existing young people are fully understood before they move into the home.
(‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 56, paragraph 11.4)

- The registered person must ensure that plans form the basis of the young people’s care. In particular, that plans relating to behaviours, needs and risks are clearly linked and work together. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 41, paragraph 9.1)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The staff team engages positively and sensitively with each young person, embracing their unique profile of needs and range of starting points. The young people, who have highly divergent needs and backgrounds, are able to settle and develop a sense of belonging.

Disaffected young people without structure and routine are consistently and carefully supported; they start developing trust in adults and feelings of security in the home.

The young people engaged in full-time education become more purposeful and motivated to achieve qualifications. Those who have disengaged from formal learning are following plans for a return to full-time education. Those with no provision yet secured are supported to maintain readiness for a return to full-time education by following a daily programme in the home that approximates a normal school day.

Some young people make dramatic improvements in self-care and reduction in social isolation. One young person said, 'I never used to leave my room and now I never go there except to sleep.' Others become willing to address upsetting issues from the past and engage with specialist helping professionals. All the young people experience a liberating sense of acceptance and become more comfortable in expressing themselves and asserting their individuality. One young person said, 'I feel free to be who I am. They understand my style.'

The young people say that staff care about them, and some young people have been sensitively and carefully supported through events of significant personal loss and trauma.

Care planning systems are developing and are currently adequate in guiding staff to support the safety and progress of the young people. The documents being used, however, need to be more coherently linked and more effective in targeting efforts as well as measuring and reflecting the progress that the young people make.

The high-quality and well-maintained physical environment of the home exudes a homely atmosphere and sense of the young people who live there. Bedrooms broadcast individuality and personal preference. These factors combine to promote a sense of belonging and being valued, and contribute to the development of positive relationships between the young people and staff.

The staff team displays a good understanding and connection with families or other adults significant to the lives of the young people. This enables staff to facilitate contact arrangements in a way that maximises the benefits to the young people. Routine telephone well-being calls by the home to the young people during their overnight contacts is affirming and reassuring, and reinforces young people's relationships with staff.

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

The young people feel safe and protected in the home but are also encouraged to take developmentally appropriate risks. They are taught and advised about how to keep themselves safe in the community. One young person said, 'They keep me safe but they also teach me to keep myself safe, and I can do that when I go out.'

Individual risk assessments are relevant, specific and clearly focused on reducing the specifically identified risks. The routine procedures in place to identify and understand the risks and needs associated with the young people before they move into the home have weaknesses and need to be made more robust and comprehensive.

When the young people go missing from the home, the response of staff is urgent and measured. Liaison with the police, local authorities and parents and carers is positive and efficient. Staff will go to any reasonable lengths to locate and safeguard the young people and also to understand the reasons why they have gone missing. The patient and consistent responses of staff result in young people who have pre-existing persistent patterns of missing behaviour progressively reducing these patterns, becoming safer and more engaged with staff and the home. Staff are well-informed about specialised areas of risk such as exploitation and radicalisation, and are sensitive to the indicators for the possible involvement of the young people.

Staff are confident and controlled when dealing with the young people's challenging and unwanted behaviours. They are skilled in de-escalation and will only intervene physically when absolutely necessary and will then do so with care. This measured response helps the young people to reflect on and understand their behaviour and its unwanted consequences for all concerned.

The staff team knows their locality well and uses this knowledge to protect the young people from avoidable hazards and pitfalls. Health and safety practice, including fire safety, is maintained to a good standard.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager leads a motivated and focused staff team with vision, enthusiasm and passion. Within the limits of reason, she places no bounds on the progress that the young people can make and what they can achieve. This positivity is maintained regardless of starting points and setbacks along the way, and creates a fertile environment in which the young people can make progress and overcome difficulties.

The leadership in the home displays a readiness to recognise any weakness or shortfall in the service and a zeal for improvement and development. Responsibility for mistakes is accepted and some difficult lessons learned. The registered manager has a firm grip on the key operational areas of the home and maintains an effective system for monitoring the progress and well-being of the young people. Systems could, however,

be improved to provide more reliable and objective measures of the progress that the young people make in key areas.

Staff are supported and stimulated by a meaningful induction, training programme and regular supervision. There are, however, discrepancies between supervision policy, practice, contracts and the arrangements as set out in the home's statement of purpose. These need to be brought in line. Current probation procedures do not clearly demonstrate that staff have achieved the level of competency required for the job role and are suitable for permanent appointment.

The registered manager is skilled and competent in liaising with external agencies in a way that maximises the outcomes for the young people. She is clear about how and when to escalate concerns when the performance of these agencies is inadequate.

Leaders and managers are proactive and far-sighted in planning leadership succession in the home and for ensuring that solid arrangements are in place for periods when the registered manager plans to be absent from the home.

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: 1256417

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Limited

Registered provider address: Acorn Homes UK, 424 Margate Road, Ramsgate, Kent CT12 6SJ

Responsible individual: David Knowles

Registered manager: Stacey Christian

Inspector:

John Pledger, social care inspector

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