

1183936

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately operated home provides care and accommodation for up to six children. The home's statement of purpose states that the home offers placements for young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. Placements are generally medium to long term. At the time of the inspection four children were living at the home. The home registered with Ofsted in August 2015. The manager registered with Ofsted since August 2020.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF Inspections on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 1 February 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 March 2022

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 August 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/08/2019	Full	Good
13/05/2019	Full	Inadequate
01/05/2018	Full	Good
24/05/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children reported that they like living in this home. They say that they get on well with the other children and there is fun and laughter in this home. Children and staff have positive relationships that are developed through informal talks, for example at the gym, in the kitchen or in structured key-work sessions.

Children make good progress from their starting points. The manager's vision for children is to 'aim high but ensure that the fundamental scaffold is in place to get there.' There is a strong focus on ensuring that children have a structured daily routine. There is also great emphasis on children adhering to boundaries, developing life skills, attending education and focussing on good health and well-being.

Children are encouraged to participate in day-to-day decisions about their lives. For example, the games room is decorated and has been equipped in line with what children asked for.

Children are supported well to make good progress in their education. A tutor is linked to the home and is committed to ensuring that children achieve basic education and skills levels. However, when children refuse to attend school or utilise the tutor, the range of activities offered should be expanded with a clear focus on education and learning that meets their needs and develops and reflects their creative, cultural, intellectual interests and skills.

Children benefit from choosing and engaging in a wide range of leisure and recreational activities. The registered manager is planning an outward bounds trip to the Brecon Beacons and involving the children in the Duke of Edinburgh awards scheme. The aim of this is to provide children with new experiences and a sense of achievement and success.

Staff and managers support children to develop their independence skills. One child who was not ready to move to semi-independent accommodation, has remained living in the home and is being supported to transition from the home when he is ready to do so.

Some children attend the gym and through their sessions learn about basic nutrition and exercise methods. One staff member reported that attending the gym has had a positive influence on children's emotional health and well-being.

Children are supported to maintain links with their family. Staff and managers work to develop positive relationships with family members while recognising the complexity of these relationships for children and how they can influence self-esteem and confidence.

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

Children say that they feel safe in this home. Staff and managers know the children well. Risks are identified early on and children are helped to think about risk and what it means for them; for example, through key working sessions, house meetings and online training.

The manager has taken the decision to limit the number of children living in the home until there are enough staff in place to operate effectively and safely. This will ensure that children always receive appropriate levels of support and supervision.

Children have positive relationships with staff. Children say that they can speak to staff or managers if they have concerns or worries. When children do raise concerns, they are dealt with appropriately.

Risk assessments are in place and are regularly reviewed. Risk assessments consider issues such as missing from home, self-harm, cannabis use and criminal child exploitation. When children have been missing from home, staff and managers respond effectively. The number of missing episodes has decreased significantly since the last inspection.

Staff and managers ensure that children understand the importance of treating others with respect. Children are challenged with regard to their inappropriate language, remarks and attitude. This demonstrates that children are helped to learn to appreciate equality, diversity and what discrimination means.

Staff are aware of changes in mood, behaviour or body language that may indicate that a child is not coping. Restraint is rarely used, however, de-briefs with staff and the child take place to understand what could have been done differently when restraint has been used.

Staff and managers respond effectively to safeguarding concerns. The local authority designated officer commented that, 'This is a provider that appears to have a good understanding of when and why to contact the LADO.'

The home is tidy and well maintained. There is a home improvement plan in place and the manager wishes to engage children in this. One child reported that they feel safe in the community compared to where they lived previously.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Children benefit from effective, solution-focused leaders and managers who are focused on creating a child-centred service. This is complemented by a competent staff team who are determined to improve children's lives. A commendable strength of the home is the warm, amiable and trusting relationships between the children and staff.

The new senior managers provide clear leadership and direction. The appointment of additional deputy managers will further strengthen the management structure. They will also provide additional male role models to the children.

The dynamic, appropriately experienced registered manager leads by example. A social worker has described this individual as 'amazing', and an educational professional felt they were 'exemplary'. Good partnership arrangements with a wide range of agencies and professionals benefit children.

Staff feel valued and well supported, both professionally and personally. They benefit from reflective supervision, regular team meetings, a wide range of training, structured inductions and appraisals.

A safeguarding professional highlighted it would be useful for staff to have further training in attachment and trauma. Staff also echoed this as part of their wish to provide more trauma-informed care.

Staff praise the organisation, highlighting the bonuses and additional support received to address their personal needs. Additional support is available for children through the organisation's therapist. The independent visitor challenges leaders and managers constructively and raises their awareness of good practice.

The requirements and recommendations raised at the last inspection have generally been met. However, quality of care reviews should include the opinions of children, parents and staff. This information is gathered, however, it is not detailed in the report.

There is good capacity to further improve, which is detailed in the home's comprehensive development plan. Leaders and managers are aware of the home's strengths and areas for development. The introduction of more research-informed practice demonstrates the wish to provide outstanding care.

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 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>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>promote opportunities for each child to learn informally. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(i)(iii)(v))</p>	31 May 2022
<p>The system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the quality of care must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents and staff. (Regulation 45 (5))</p>	31 May 2022

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs in particular, in relation to attachment and trauma. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 53, paragraph 10.11)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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: Unit 73-74, Maple Leaf Business Park, Manston, Ramsgate, CT12 5GD

Responsible individual: Keith Riley

Registered manager: Paul Johnston

Inspector(s)

Sharon Payne, Social Care Inspector
Colin Bent, Social Care Inspector

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