

1258199

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a privately owned children's home that provides care and accommodation for up to five children and young people. The statement of purpose states that children and young people accommodated may display challenging behaviour and difficulties forming and sustaining relationships.

Inspection dates: 24 to 25 October 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 January 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24 January 2018	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.

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 requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child overcome any such barriers.</p> <p>(Regulation 8 (1)(2)(iii))</p> <p>Specifically, ensure that education provision is available prior to admission whenever possible and work swiftly with partner agencies to address shortfalls in education.</p>	18/12/2018
<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— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard requires the registered person to— ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child.</p> <p>(Regulation 13 (1)(2)(e))</p>	18/12/2018
<p>The independent person must produce a report about the visit which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether— children are effectively safeguarded; and the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being.</p> <p>(Regulation 44 (4)(a)(b))</p>	18/12/2018

Recommendations

- Any allegation of harm or abuse must be addressed in line with the home's child protection policy. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 44, paragraph 9.17) In particular, ensure that records of investigations show a clear conclusion and the rationale for staff returning to work if that is the outcome.
- Any sanctions used to address poor behaviour should be restorative in nature, to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the staff caring for them and the wider community. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.38)
- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs, and should understand the key role they play in training and development of staff in the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11) In particular, ensure that training records give quick reference to the range of training each staff member has attained and use this to analyse training needs.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children living in this home benefit from well-planned care that is provided by staff who have forged good relationships with them.

The home provides an environment that is of a good standard. It is decorated with some personal touches, including photographs of the children who live there and also those who lived there recently but have left. Children feel at home and at ease in their surroundings.

The managers and staff in the home have sought to promote children's education. One young person is attending a Prince's Trust scheme that is greatly improving her chances of returning to college or gaining employment. Two children have been admitted to the home without external educational placements, but in both cases managers have proactively sought a school placement, including through liaison with the head of the virtual school. In the absence of a school placement, a package of tutoring and staff-led educational activities is provided. This has gone well, but children lack the socialisation that being educated with peers may bring.

Children make good progress. This is particularly evident in improvements in behaviour and in the reduction in missing episodes for one of the children. Children have also become closely engaged with staff. This has improved greatly in recent months, following a period of disengagement by some children. The increased consistency of approach and stability of the staff team in the recent period have facilitated this change.

Children are encouraged to engage in a range of activities. For one child, this has included being part of a scout overnight stay, which was a considerable achievement for

him.

When practical to do so, the home works closely with family members, facilitating contact and supporting children and parents. One parent of a child who recently left the home said of the staff, 'I couldn't fault them.'

Children and young people who have left the home during this inspection period have had mixed experiences. For some, leaving the home has been a positive move to foster care or a return to the family home, but for others it has included placement breakdown and notice being served because the home could no longer meet their needs. This was particularly necessary in the period before the current manager took up post, and there is now greater stability in the home. It is notable that one of the young people living in the home is moving into independent living at a more measured pace to ensure that she gets the most from the current placement and to increase the likelihood that her next placement is successful.

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

Children and young people feel safe in this children's home. Earlier in this inspection period, children's behaviour, including the risk of them going missing, was not responded to well. However, since the managerial changes, and with increased stability in the staff team, all staff are clear about their roles, including how to minimise the risks of challenging behaviour and of children going missing.

Staff have undertaken safeguarding training, and all were able to demonstrate a clear knowledge and understanding of what constitutes a safeguarding incident and how to manage it. The manager keeps clear records of all safeguarding matters. However, some investigation reports were limited in detail, for example not recording the rationale for decisions made during, or at the end of, the process.

Staff ensure that children and young people have a safe place to live. Staff have a good understanding of the children's needs and follow well-written risk assessments that support children's safety inside and outside the home.

Behaviour is generally well managed. Staff are trained in physical intervention but use this only as a last resort and for the briefest period possible. Records of physical intervention are clear and follow regulation precisely. The sanctions that are given are also proportionate; however, they are generally not restorative in nature and this could be improved. A culture of apologising to those you have wronged has been established in the home and this has been a positive factor in maintaining good relationships in occasionally fraught situations.

The safety of the home is afforded a high priority. The environment was noted to be safe throughout. Health and safety checks are done regularly, and the manager systematically monitors and records these. Similarly, fire safety is well managed and all actions stemming from the last fire audit have been completed.

Staff recruitment is undertaken safely to ensure that all those employed in the home are suitable to work with children. Files of new starters were reviewed; all showed that each required check had been undertaken and recorded clearly, alongside evidence of reasons for gaps in employment and feedback following the verification of references.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

This home has undergone significant change and some turbulence since the last inspection in January 2018. The registered manager has left her post and a new manager, in post since July, is making a significant difference in settling the staff team and providing effective leadership. During the early part of this inspection period, there was an unsettling turnover of staff, which had an impact on some placements. During this time, children did not experience positive continuity of care. Since July 2018, when the new manager started, this has changed, and staff are now consistently providing good-quality care. A requirement in respect of this is made to reflect the earlier situation.

The current manager has previously been registered in respect of other services and plans to register for this home as soon as is practical. She is qualified to NVQ level 4. She has provided mature and thoughtful leadership for the staff, who have responded well to this. She has been the supervisor of all staff in the home but plans to share this role.

The manager has worked hard to establish productive working relationships with external professionals, and feedback from them was positive.

Many staff have been here for a short time. All are inducted well and have undertaken essential training. However, the staff training records are not maintained in a way that enables easy analysis, and this may inhibit effective planning for their training needs.

The independent visitor for the home has recently changed. The visitor provides comprehensive reports and makes recommendations. The manager has consistently acted upon these. It was noted that the reports do not specifically state whether the independent visitor considers children to be safe or considers their welfare to be promoted.

The organisation plans to change the responsible individual for this home. The prospective responsible individual was present throughout most of this inspection. She has worked closely with the home since starting employment with the company in June 2018. She has been a very positive factor in introducing a calmer and engaging culture across the staff team.

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: 1258199

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(s)

Kenneth Smith, social care inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2018