

# SC478616

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Ltd

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. It is registered to accommodate up to four children who may display challenging behaviour and experience difficulties in forming and sustaining relationships. The company also has a school, which children may attend.

The manager was registered with Ofsted in November 2018.

**Inspection dates:** 17 to 18 June 2019

**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:** 14 February 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** declined in effectiveness

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>Inspection type</b>	<b>Inspection judgement</b>
14/02/2019	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
27/06/2018	Full	Good
09/03/2018	Interim	Improved effectiveness
21/11/2017	Full	Requires improvement to be 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 quality and purpose of care standard</p> <p>In particular, the standard requires the registered person to— provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably; provide to children personal items that are appropriate for their age and understanding. (Regulation 6 (2)(a)(vii)(viii))</p>	30/09/2019
<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 to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(c))</p> <p>Specifically, all staff, including temporary staff, should be given the information and resources they need to work safely with children in the home.</p>	30/09/2019

### Inspection judgements

#### Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children in the home have positive relationships with each other and with the staff. There is a warm atmosphere in the house. Staff show a high level of respect and affection for the children in their care. Staff recognise that in any group of children there will be stresses and tensions. They aim to provide children with opportunities to express and manage this in a constructive way.

Engagement in education is promoted strongly for all children. The manager advocates effectively with external professionals to ensure that children have access to education placements that suit their needs.

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of children's care plans and risk assessments. They can talk fluently about current aims for each child and describe the support they give children to meet their objectives. Staff can also identify key areas of progress for children.

The manager has created new, quick reference guides to help staff see, at a glance, the content of each child's key-working sessions. This helps to identify if any important areas for the child are not being discussed. Staff reported that this has improved the quality of the key-working relationships they have with children. The manager is also working hard to create a more informal and less institutional framework for these sessions. Staff favour ad-hoc sessions which are referred to as 'chats with children'.

The communal areas are in good decorative order. In general, the home is clean and well maintained. The outdoor space has been redesigned by children and now contains a picnic table, an area for barbecues and solar lighting. However, the bedrooms and bathrooms appear worn and tired. The registered manager acknowledges that more could be done to make the children's rooms feel homelier. He is already in consultation with staff and children to bring the decoration of these areas into line with the rest of the house.

Children are offered a wide range of activities and these are recorded well. Staff are encouraged to link chosen activities to developmental goals for each child.

Staff place an emphasis on continuity of care for children who are leaving, or have left, the service. Planning for transitions is careful and considered. Children who have left are encouraged to remain in contact with the home. Staff work hard to share information openly with new carers to ensure stability during transition.

Older children can take part in a dedicated programme with staff, using a workbook, to help prepare them for independence.

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

Staff have a good understanding of how to keep children safe. They also have capacity to learn from incidents and continually develop their practice in this area.

Staff have managed to significantly reduce incidents of restraint. Staff describe better quality relationships with children. They also feel more confident in knowing how different children respond to de-escalation strategies. This has enabled them to seek more positive solutions to difficult and challenging behaviours.

Referencing of risk assessments, key-work sessions and incidents in placement plans is clear. This helps to identify how staff make choices or decisions in children's plans.

The single allegation in this inspection period was treated with utmost seriousness by the manager. Investigations were detailed. All relevant external partners were kept well informed and engaged in the decision-making process. The children involved were satisfied with how it was dealt with.

Staff are showing growth in confidence as the management situation becomes more stable. This can be seen in the introduction of a more strategic and proactive response to episodes of absence from the home. Very positive change can be seen for one child who had been displaying unsafe behaviours.

Staff focus on positive behaviours and try to avoid the overuse of sanctions. Staff feel this approach is effective. This is reflected in the reduction of negative incidents in the home.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The registered manager of the home is on extended leave and two managers have held responsibility for the home in the interim. The registered manager is due to return shortly. Staff feel well supported and have a high level of confidence in the current interim manager. They said he is always available to them to talk through any issues or concerns. They feel that he has empowered them to develop and grow in their roles. Staff feel this has had a direct impact on the improved progress of children. They said the house feels a more stable and productive environment to work in.

Internal monitoring is developing well. The manager has created an action plan that clearly takes on board feedback from Ofsted and the independent visitor. He has also gone above and beyond this with his own evaluation and ideas. The whole staff team appears keen to learn and grow. The manager is very open and gives an honest appraisal of the home's strengths and weaknesses.

Generally, recruitment practice is safe. The organisation demonstrates high levels of verification to ensure the accuracy of staff information provided.

During this visit, there was a new staff member on shift who had not completed mandatory training. The organisation places the onus on staffing agencies to complete training for temporary staff. The manager still needs to know what training agency staff have completed and whether it is relevant to the service and the children in the home. The manager agrees that this is of concern. With the support of the responsible individual, immediate steps are being taken to address this with the operational care manager and director.

Children feel confident to speak up if they need to raise concerns or complaints. Children felt listened to and said that staff took their views seriously.

The manager recognises that he needs to work on finding ways to improve participation for children. More formal approaches are not proving effective. Staff are finding that

informal and less institutional communication yields the best results.

## **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:** SC478616

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Acorn Homes (UK) Ltd

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

**Responsible individual:** Carol Bradley

**Registered manager:** Blaise Clifford

## Inspector

Peter Jackson, social care inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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