

SC478616

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home provides care and accommodation for up to four children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, and experience difficulties in forming and sustaining relationships. The company also has a school, which children may attend. The home is operated by a private organisation.

The manager was registered with Ofsted in April 2021

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 September 2021

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: 17 June 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: Good

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/06/2019	Full	Good
14/02/2019	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
27/06/2018	Full	Good
09/03/2018	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children experience excellent care from staff who are attentive and familiar with the children's needs. Staff show a high level of respect and affection for the children. As a result, children develop positive relationships with staff and make good progress.

Children move to the home following a carefully considered matching process. The manager and staff review the needs of the child moving in alongside the needs of the children living in the home. This includes thorough consideration of potential risks and how these can be managed. Although thorough, the process does not consider any risks relating to the location of the home, or staff skills, to further demonstrate that a child's individual needs can be met. However, this has not had an impact on children moving in and benefiting from careful and effective care planning.

Staff demonstrate respect, openness and honesty in their approach to childcare. This has enabled the children to experience positive and secure relationships which provide a safe base from which to explore their past experiences and develop positive pathways to their future goals.

Staff value children's wishes and views, and children are supported to develop their interests. This provides opportunities for the children to engage in a variety of different experiences. One child wanted to positively remember a family member. Staff joined them to complete a charity 'colour run', raising money for a local charity. As a result, children have greater opportunities to develop their social interactions and staff support them to integrate into the wider community.

Children benefit from targeted one-to-one time with staff. This level of attention and consultation provides opportunities for children to explore areas that are important to them as well as working through more complex issues. This is provided in a variety of forums. For example, staff supported a child to understand their risk-taking behaviour by completing an online course together. This sensitive and inclusive approach has contributed to the child's significant reduction of risk-taking behaviour.

Staff support the children to engage in education. The staff work with the in-house school to develop education and support that is tailored to children's individual needs. Therefore, the children enjoy a varied timetable that meets their learning needs. One child attends the local horse-riding stables and really enjoys learning about caring and managing for horses. Consequently, children's experiences of learning and education are positive, and they make good progress.

Staff understand the importance of family connections. The children are supported to maintain these relationships. A parent spoke very positively to the inspector about being able to contribute to decisions about how their child is cared for and that they

are involved in decisions about their child's future plans. Staff work in partnership with people who are important to children, and this helps them benefit from a consistent experience of care and support.

Staff place an emphasis on continuity of care for children who are leaving, or have left, the service. Moving on from the home is carefully considered and planned. Children receive a memory book of their experiences and significant events. Children who have left are encouraged to remain in contact with the home. Consequently, children are able to understand their journey and feel valued and respected. This also means that they continue to benefit from the relationships that they have formed.

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

Staff demonstrate a sound knowledge of safeguarding. Risks and vulnerabilities, with regard to the children, are well understood and clearly communicated within the staff team. Children's positive relationships with a consistent staff team have led to very few safeguarding incidents. Consequently, children are safeguarded effectively.

Risk management plans are in place for all children. This supports staff to understand and manage current risks. The manager regularly reviews children's risks with staff, to develop strategies and manage any emerging concerns. This practice demonstrates that the team value collaborative working to potentially reduce the risk of harm to children.

Staff help children to become increasingly safe. For example, one child has engaged in an extensive programme to support them to learn about knife crime.

Incidents which require the use of physical intervention are rare. When they do occur, the registered manager reviews each incident with the children and adults involved. Following several incidents involving one child, the registered manager carried out a critical reflection on practice. He established that different ways of working with the child were likely to be more effective. This responsive approach to meeting the child's needs has reduced the frequency of incidents.

The registered manager has taken clear steps to manage and reduce missing-from-care episodes. There are clear guidance and protocols in place. The staff work with professionals to develop risk management strategies. If children do go missing, staff talk to them when they return, to make sure they are well and to help them understand risks and make safer choices.

Safe recruitment practices are understood and implemented by the staff responsible for this area of practice. However, there are gaps in the registered manager's records of his recruitment monitoring. Safe practice reduces the risk of unsuitable adults being employed at the home, but lack of management scrutiny runs the risk that any omissions may go unnoticed.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is passionate and has a clear vision. His aspirations for the children, staff and improving the home are shared by the staff team. This child-centred approach and exceptional role modelling motivate the staff team to maintain high standards and to focus on what matters to children.

Staff receive regular supervision. Supervision encompasses a balanced agenda, which covers areas of childcare practice and responsibilities, and the staff's development and progression. Staff say they are well supported and benefit from opportunities to reflect on their practice. Consequently, they are motivated to provide the best care for children.

Staff receive a range of training. This includes specific training to meet the individual needs of children. Staff stated that the training is supportive of their work and is always encouraged by the registered manager. This demonstrates that the registered manager recognises the importance of skilled and trained staff.

The organisation maintains the home's statement of purpose and submits updates to Ofsted by way of addendums. However, this document does not reflect the individualised care and provision. This is a missed opportunity to inform stakeholders of the range and quality of the care provided. Complaints information for children does not include the independent reviewing officer and it is recommended this be added. The lack of the registered manager's oversight and input into the statement of purpose risks staff being unclear about the home's intended aims and objectives.

Leaders and managers' monitoring of the quality of care is generally effective. This is undermined however, by some areas that lack a thorough process and cumbersome paperwork. The registered manager has oversight of daily records and reports but does not clearly evidence how he uses this oversight to further improve practices or address any areas for development.

Working closely with other professionals is prioritised by the registered manager. Feedback from external professionals, such as social workers, was very positive regarding communication and partnership working. This was also highlighted as positive by parents. This demonstrates a culture of openness which ensures children benefit from meaningful joint work.

What does the children's home need to do to improve? Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the home's Statement of Purpose is child-focused, indicating how the home provides individualised care to meet the Quality Standards for the children in their care. For completeness, the registered person should consider the value of adding the independent reviewing officer to the children's complaints section. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.5)
- The registered person should maintain good employment practice. They must demonstrate that recruitment of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)

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: SC478616

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Limited

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

Responsible individual: Carol Bradley

Registered manager: Bradley Bing

Inspector

Rebecca Fisher, 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 children looked after, 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 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://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

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: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2021