

# 1256417

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 provides care and accommodation for up to seven children who, according to the home's statement of purpose, are likely to present with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties as a result of past trauma.

The current manager registered with Ofsted in August 2017.

### **Inspection dates: 10 to 11 March 2020**

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account** **outstanding**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

**Date of last inspection:** 4 October 2018

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** Good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:**

None.

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/10/2018	Full	Good

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

Children flourish in this home and make significant progress from their starting points. Staff are committed to the children's continued development which means that clear and consistent progress is both expected and achieved. Children are assessed by the organisation's health and well-being team in their first 28 days of living in the home. This assessment is used to inform staff how to provide care and support for children in a way that best meets their needs. A copy of this assessment is sent to the registered manager and the child's social worker to ensure that their needs are known at every level. Staff therefore feel confident that they can provide highly individualised care.

There is evidence of excellent joint-working relationships. The health and well-being worker reported that they have a solid relationship with the home. Communication is good, and key professionals are invited to team meetings where relevant. Partners said that they are kept well informed, and that reports are always received on time. Staff attend carer consultation evenings. This helps children to understand that they are genuinely cared for by the people who are invested in their development.

Children make excellent progress in all areas of their lives. They are supported by staff who know them well. Staff have a good understanding of the children's health needs and confidently work with health professionals to ensure consistent progress in this area. As a result, one child has significantly reduced their use of tobacco and another reduced their misuse of drugs.

Staff help children to understand the importance of education. Children are supported to access school and learning. Children have high levels of attendance and the home funds extra tuition for a child who has been identified as needing extra support with learning. One child is preparing for GCSEs and is aiming for a career in event management. He said, 'I'm doing so well.' Children complete online courses recommended by staff to support their development and, to celebrate their success, their certificates of achievement are displayed in the main communal area of the home.

There is a marked improvement in children's emotional well-being. Children are able to identify the progress that they have made, and one child said, 'I love it here. I used to run away before, but I don't do that here.' Children appear to be happy and there is a general feeling of warmth at the home. Children and staff look forward to coming together to share their day.

Staff encourage children to have their own interests and to develop an identity outside of the home. As a result, children are involved in a range of sporting activities like boxing, swimming and badminton. They also enjoy group activities which includes go-karting and trampolining.

Diversity is promoted well in this home. The children decided that they would like to have a pride event at the home, and were all involved in planning a garden party to celebrate lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ). This helped, in a positive way, to challenge any discriminatory views and to promote a shared culture of acceptance and understanding.

Children can express their views and wishes. An experienced staff team places high value on the things children say. The staff talk to children to understand their experience of care, and use this understanding to inform practice. Children are consulted in many ways, including through house meetings, questionnaires and key-work sessions. At a recent house meeting, a suggestion was made for children to have an allowance to spend on the weekly shopping. The manager granted this.

Staff understand the importance of children's time with their family and those who are important to them. Children are supported to have family time safely. Staff supervise this time when necessary, and children can travel independently to visit their families if it is safe for them to do so. Staff have good relationships with the families and this includes the foster family of a child's sibling.

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

Children reported that they feel safe and they express this in their house meetings and key-work sessions. Excellent risk assessments are in place and the 28-day assessment completed by the health and well-being team ensures that risks are identified quickly, and staff are able to work with children to reduce risks. Children are involved in devising risk assessments. This enables them to fully engage with safety and support plans, and gives them an opportunity to help staff understand what matters most to them. Where a child needs one-to-one supervision there is increased staffing to support this. There are strong boundaries in place and young people are aware of the consequences of overstepping these.

There are strong protocols in place for children who go missing. Staff search for them; contact friends and relatives; keep information on the places that they tend to go to; and work with the local police and missing persons team. Staff are relentless in relation to finding missing children and securing their safe return. Staff ensure that children are given opportunities to discuss their reasons for being absent. Staff are also diligent in requesting return home interviews from placing authorities.

Consistent boundaries are in place and staff emphasise the use of 'consequences' instead of 'sanctions'. This leads to children's feelings of improved well-being and security. All young people have behaviour management plans that are updated as needed. A recent incident resulted in the plan being updated, and all staff were made aware of this. Staff use a range of strategies, such as de-escalation, praise and change of staff, to manage behaviours effectively.

Physical interventions are seldom used and if they are used, it is only when absolutely necessary. The frequency of physical intervention with one child declined significantly for a period following the use of de-escalation techniques, including

offering time out and the removal of an audience. Other strategies are used where possible.

There are good safeguarding processes in place which promote the children's welfare in every aspect of their lives. Staff receive training which is consistent and of a good standard. Leaders and managers have clear oversight of safeguarding practice and advocate strongly with the professional network to ensure that everybody plays their part in making good decisions and carrying out agreed actions in response to safeguarding concerns.

Maintenance of and adherence to schedules for health and safety checks need some attention. The procedures in place are not always followed. The manager took immediate steps to address this during the inspection. While efforts have been made to make this a welcoming and homely environment, the padlocks on cupboards in the kitchen create an institutional feel. Attention also needs to be paid to the general maintenance of the home.

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

The manager is passionate and dedicated to making sure that children have a positive experience of care and make excellent progress. She is energetic and self-motivated, and has high expectations of staff and children. She models exceptional practice, and feedback from staff on her management style has been excellent. Staff show a high level of respect for her and one staff member stated, 'She runs this like a tight ship. We know what she expects.'

The manager provides an environment where staff can develop and learn. Supervision is consistent, and staff reported that they value this time. Supervision is reflective. Staff have annual appraisals with a review every six months to ensure that they are still on track with their developmental targets. One relatively new member of staff has the ambition to become a team leader and he reported that the manager has started to set targets for him to achieve this level. He said, 'They support me 100%.' There is a comprehensive induction and probation process in place, which ensures that only the most suitable workers are employed.

Excellent progress-tracking systems are in place that enable the manager to have a clear understanding of what the children's needs are and how they can be met. The manager ensures that all staff are aware of any changes and what these mean for the children. Children receive both structured and impromptu key-work sessions and this includes sessions with the manager. Children have targets and when these targets are met they are celebrated, and new ones agreed with the child.

The manager has excellent working relationships with partner agencies and schools. She works closely with the organisation's health and well-being service and its school. One professional stated, 'The manager is good and keeps us updated – she cares about the children – she listens to advice.'

Information about the risks relating to the local area is well known by the manager. A detailed and well-thought-out location risk assessment has been developed. This is shared and understood by all of the staff.

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

- That the registered manager continues to seek ways in which to enhance the physical environment to increase the homely and domestic feel of the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15 paragraph 3.9)

In particular, find an alternative to padlocks in the kitchen.

- The registered person is responsible for ensuring that all staff consistently follow the home's policies and procedures for the benefit of the children in the home's care. Everyone working at the home must understand their roles and responsibilities and what they are authorised to decide on their own initiative. There should be clear lines of accountability. Each home must have clear arrangements in place to maintain effective management when the manager is absent, off duty or on leave.

In particular, ensure that health and safety procedures are followed to maintain a clean and healthy environment.

## **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:** 1256417

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

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

**Registered provider address:** Acorns Homes (UK) Ltd, 424 Margate Road, Ramsgate, Kent CT12 6SJ

**Responsible individual:** Carol Bradley

**Registered manager:** Stacey Christian

## Inspector

Vevene Muhammad, Social Care Inspector

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