

1250521

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately operated home provides care for up to four children with emotional difficulties. The company also has a school which children may attend.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since 4 August 2020.

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 March 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 18 January 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/01/2022	Full	Good
04/02/2020	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
05/06/2019	Full	Good
18/10/2018	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The children develop strong and trusting relationships with the staff. Over time, the children build positive attachments with the staff and they develop a renewed sense of safety, security and belonging. Many of the children remain settled at the home for long periods.

A sensitive approach is taken to meeting the children's individual needs. For example, the staff are skilled at helping the children to understand the importance of personal hygiene and a healthy lifestyle. The staff understand the children's individual health needs and take great care in ensuring that the children do not feel stigmatised or embarrassed when discussing sensitive issues. The children are helped to understand puberty, and they feel confident about seeking guidance when they need to.

Most of the children are making good progress with their education, although some experience the occasional setback. When this happens, the staff communicate effectively with education professionals to try and remove any barriers that may be preventing a child from reaching their full potential. One education professional spoke positively about how the staff have supported the school's approach to managing a child's behaviour in the school environment.

The children's individual identities and personalities are celebrated at the home. The children feel safe enough to explore their emerging identities and share their thoughts and feelings with the staff. There is a culture of listening to the children at the home, and the children feel that their views are understood and valued.

There is a strong commitment to promoting the children's emotional well-being and good mental health. Leaders and managers have been proactive in ensuring that, when needed, the children receive appropriate counselling or mentoring support. One child spoke positively about how they have been able to explore difficult issues with their counsellor. The support one child has received has had positive results in relation to the development of appropriate social skills.

The children are developing age-appropriate independence skills. The registered manager is introducing a system to ensure that there is a detailed record of everything the child has achieved on their journey towards becoming a young, independent adult.

The children have access to an excellent range of activities and leisure pursuits. They are encouraged to join local clubs and organisations. One child has benefited enormously from their engagement with local community organisations, learning new skills, discovering new talents, and having lots of fun along the way. Over time, the children become more self-confident, and their self-esteem improves.

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

The children feel safe at this home, and this can be partly attributed to the trusting relationships they build with the staff. The children have the confidence to speak to the staff about any worries or concerns they may have. The staff respond appropriately and take action to ensure the potential for the child to come to harm is minimised.

The children receive support and guidance to help them understand the possible negative consequences from engaging in unsafe behaviours. For example, children who may place themselves at risk through their online activity receive focused key-work sessions on how they could potentially be groomed and exploited. Children are also educated on the likely consequences of becoming involved in criminal activities.

Despite this generally good practice, shortfalls were identified in the response to one serious incident. The staff did not immediately inform leaders and managers when concerning content was found on a child's mobile phone. It was also identified that the staff do not have clear guidance on how to respond when concerning material is found on a child's electronic device. No children came to harm because of these shortfalls, and it was an isolated incident.

The children rarely go missing from home. When missing episodes do occur, there is a prompt and proactive response from the staff, and every opportunity is taken to secure the child's quick return to the home. The strategies in children's risk assessments are followed and there is good liaison with external agencies.

The staff are familiar with each child's vulnerabilities and associated risks, and the children's individual risk assessments contain relevant information. There are clear strategies for the staff to follow to minimise the potential for the children to come to harm. One risk assessment had not been reviewed and updated following a serious incident involving a child.

Each child has their own behaviour support plan. These plans are comprehensive and demonstrate that the staff have detailed knowledge of the indicators and triggers that could result in a child needing additional support. The use of physical intervention to manage a child's behaviour is proportionate and is kept to a minimum. A rewards and consequences system is in place to promote positive behaviours. However, there is currently insufficient analysis of how effective consequences have been in supporting a child to address any unwanted behaviours.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There is an experienced registered manager who manages the home effectively and promotes high standards of practice. He is clearly committed to meeting the needs of the children and developing the potential of each member of staff. The staff are highly complimentary about the managerial support they receive. As a result of this, staff retention is good and other staff from across the organisation have welcomed the opportunity to transfer to this home.

The manager has built a positive learning culture in the home. For example, staff meetings have been used to help develop the staff's knowledge of practice issues. Recent meetings have focused on responding to children who may self-harm and implications of attachment theory on day-to-day interactions with the children. The staff have access to a comprehensive range of training, and this is complemented by additional training specifically focused on the needs of the children living in the home.

Comprehensive action has been taken to meet the requirements made at the last full inspection in January 2022.

The registered manager has been highly effective in making links with external agencies offering specialist support to vulnerable children. As a result, most of the children are receiving support and guidance relevant to their circumstances and needs. There is also good liaison with placing authorities, and there is a tenacious approach to ensuring that professional discussion takes place when a child has been involved in a significant incident.

The children's case records are maintained to a high standard. Each child has a detailed care plan which records the progress they are making towards meeting their individual goals. Some records of the key-work sessions undertaken with the children are particularly well recorded. They provide an insight into how the child is processing information, and their understanding of their personal circumstances. This information can then be used to reflect on how effectively the child's needs are being met.

The staff receive regular, good-quality supervision. This provides them with the opportunity to reflect on the children's progress and explore any emerging safeguarding issues. There is also a strong focus on professional development, with staff receiving feedback on their practice and performance. The well-being of staff is also a consistent feature of the supervision process.

The staff team works collaboratively and staff are supportive of one another. This helps to ensure that a consistent approach is taken to supporting the children and maintaining established boundaries and expectations of group living. There is a culture of high aspiration for the children, ensuring that when a child does experience a setback, the staff are ready and well prepared to support that child to make a fresh start.

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
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(v)(vii)) This is with specific reference to ensuring that children's risks assessments are updated following a serious incident, staff are provided with guidance on how to conduct checks on children's personal mobile phones, and ensuring that staff report serious safeguarding concerns to managers in a timely way.	28 April 2023
The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(vii))	28 April 2023

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: 1250521

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Ltd

Registered provider address: Unit 73 And 74 Maple Leaf Business Park,
Manston, Ramsgate CT12 5GD

Responsible individual: Keith Riley

Registered manager: Ryan Wells

Inspector

Stephen Collett, Social Care Inspector

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