

# 1256417

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

The children's home is privately owned. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to seven children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since Aug 2017.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

### Inspection dates: 16 and 17 March 2022

|                                                                                           |                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b> | <b>outstanding</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|

|                                                             |      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 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:** 10 March 2020

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 10/03/2020      | Full            | Outstanding          |
| 04/10/2018      | Full            | Good                 |

## Inspection judgements

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

Children flourish in an inclusive and positive environment. Children with very different needs and behaviours live together in a warm and supportive community. Children have learned to accept difference. The care that staff show for children and children show for each other is inspiring.

Children have made exceptional progress since coming to the home. One child said he was able to express his identity proudly and safely for the first time in his life. The child has also become a positive role model for younger children in the home. Two children with autism spectrum disorder have made excellent progress both in managing their behaviour and developing their communication skills. Children talk about the positive impact of the care and support they receive. They are proud of their own achievements.

Staff create meaningful and child-centred care plans that encourage children to set their own goals. Staff track progress well and are able to clearly describe the work they do to support children to achieve their targets. Staff celebrate children's progress, capturing these positive memories in the home's 'sparkle' books. When children leave the home, they are presented with highly personal memory books full of photographs and affirming messages from staff.

External professionals are very positive about the care and support that children receive in the home. They describe the staff as 'focused' and 'passionate'. They also reflect on the successes and growth of the children at the home.

Parents are also very happy with the placement. One parent said that her child was 'so different in himself, more aware of his emotions and other people's emotions'. Parents said, 'they wouldn't want their children to be anywhere else' and 'it feels like extended family'. Parents all agree on one thing, the growth in children's emotional understanding and empathy.

Staff and children benefit from skilled clinical support from qualified therapists. Staff say this supports them to really understand the children they work with and, in turn, enhances the growth and development of children.

The model of care is well developed and deeply embedded in the team. Staff talk about the principles of care at the home confidently and talk passionately about the impact of their model of care. This provides a consistent and stable base from which children exceed expectations.

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

Staff have a well-developed understanding of the vulnerabilities of the children they care for. Staff's patient and consistent practice has resulted in significant reductions in the risk of harm for children who previously displayed some high-risk behaviours.

Children have previously engaged in self-harm, aggressive outbursts, and harmful behaviour to others. In all cases these have been reduced to negligible levels. Staff put this success down to a strong focus on enabling and promoting personal growth, confidence, and self-esteem in children.

Where children are growing up and approaching adulthood, staff take a pragmatic and sensible approach to risk management. This allows children to develop their independence and learn how to manage life in a safe way.

Staff produce excellent risk-assessment plans which have clarity and simplicity. This enables staff to develop effective strategies for managing risk which are applied consistently by the whole team.

Staff support children to engage in bespoke safeguarding training. This enables children to complete certificated courses in topics such as internet safety, criminal and sexual exploitation. Staff have also supported children to contribute to the process of assessing risk in the local area.

Staff ensure that there is effective communication and partnership working with external agencies, contributing towards the safety and well-being of children.

Some children have struggled to manage their emotions, leading to some behaviours which others have found challenging. Significant positive change in these behaviours has been supported by staff using consistent and coherent strategies.

Staff have engaged in wider research to provide evidence-based interventions. Staff are able to identify research they have used to enhance their practice with children, for example, autism and equine therapy, Brook's Traffic Light tool for sexual behaviour, and the impact of trauma on children's development. Staff reflect on the value of having a clear basis for practice and excellent training support to deliver interventions. They say this has had a dramatic, positive impact on the children in the home.

One child with autism spectrum disorder lives in a very basic room, which shows some signs of wear. Staff have not sought any external advice on how to make his space more homely while also meeting his sensory needs.

Over this inspection period there has been a number of errors in medication administration. This is recognised by leaders and work has been done to minimise the risk of further errors. However, there still appears to be a level of anxiety displayed by some staff around safe medication administration.

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

The registered manager and her senior team at the home provide motivational leadership that has helped to create reflective, effective, and skilled staff. All staff share one characteristic, which is the drive for constant improvement both on a professional and personal level. Staff's capacity for self-reflection and constructive self-analysis permeates to the children who in turn demonstrate a reflective and empathic way of being.

Leaders are motivated to deliver the very best outcomes for children. They have high aspirations for children's futures. Children's outcomes demonstrate that staff are delivering on these expectations successfully.

Leaders present as constructively self-critical. They do not rest on their laurels when they achieve positive outcomes and consistently strive for improvement. There are some very strong examples of innovative practice. For example, engaging children in training programmes for safeguarding. Leaders are also outward looking, seeking out innovative practice that may support the growth of both children and staff at the home.

Staff talk about the high-quality support systems in place for them. They benefit from excellent professional supervision and also get regular clinical supervision to support them with the emotional impact of the role. Staff say training is excellent. They particularly praised the swiftness of the organisation to deliver bespoke training to meet the specific needs of children. For example, autism spectrum disorder awareness and epilepsy awareness.

Feedback from external agencies about the registered manager is consistently positive. It is clear that a high importance is placed on building strong networks of support around the children. This includes forming effective relationships with safeguarding teams at a local college to ensure that there is a safe placement for a child and some excellent work completed with police and substance misuse teams to support another child.

The registered manager demonstrates clear and comprehensive oversight of the home. This has enabled the development of ambitious plans for future service development.

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

### **Recommendations**

- The registered person should ensure that they seek specialist advice on providing children with autism spectrum disorder homely bedrooms while also meeting their sensory requirements. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15 paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should continue the positive work started with the team on safe medication administration, helping to manage any anxiety and reduce the risk of repeated errors during administration of medicines. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35 paragraph 7.15)

### **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) Limited

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

**Responsible individual:** Keith Riley

**Registered manager:** Stacey Christian

## Inspector

Peter Jackson, 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](mailto: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](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](mailto: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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2022