

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 is privately owned. It is registered to provide care for up to seven children who may experience social and emotional difficulties. Six children were living at the home at the time of the inspection.

The manager registered with Ofsted in May 2024.

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 March 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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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: 14 November 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/11/2023	Full	Good
07/02/2023	Full	Outstanding
16/03/2022	Full	Outstanding
10/03/2020	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children benefit from high-quality nurturing care from an experienced and stable staff team. Staff have developed warm and nurturing relationships with the children, which has been central to the children thriving. The children who have had several moves before coming to live at the home are settled and making excellent progress. The staff act as positive role models, helping the children to safely navigate relationships. Staff support the children to build compassionate and empathic relationships with each other. One child said, 'I like all the staff here. We are like one big family.'

Staff enthusiastically arrange and share in a range of exciting and enjoyable activities for the children. Staff help the children to develop interests and hobbies that are linked to their growing life skills and values. They have been supported to attend football, trampolining and boxing clubs. They enjoy a range of activities, including going on holidays, swimming and visits to football stadiums.

Arrangements for the children moving in and out are well managed. One child has moved in since the last inspection. Managers undertake comprehensive assessments to assure themselves that the staff can meet the child's needs, while at the same time continuing to consider and meet the other children's needs. A planned and phased introduction helped to prepare the children and staff team well for the new child's arrival.

This same child has now moved out. This was part of a planned move in line with their care plan. The support, education and care provided to the child was a key component in them successfully moving back to their previous carers. Managers are reflective when children move on and use the opportunity to analyse what worked well and what could be improved. Their reflections on successes and those things that could be further improved are shared with the staff team and help to guide ongoing interventions for the other children.

Staff place a high value on, and advocate strongly for, the children's education. One child's engagement with education has improved tremendously. They said that without the help of the staff they would not be in education.

Children's views, wishes and feelings are well understood by staff. The children are presented with a range of opportunities to share their views about the home and the support they receive. One-to-one conversations, managers' consultations and group discussions allow the children to contribute to the development of the home. Their choices of resources, decor, artwork and furniture create a welcoming, bright and friendly environment. The children say that they feel heard and can identify trusted adults who they can share worries with. When the children make a complaint, managers investigate and feed back to them in ways they understand.

High-quality care planning guidance is in place to support staff in meeting the children's daily needs. Attention to detail ensures that children with complex needs have clear plans. This helps staff to maintain consistency for children and helps children to navigate day-to-day challenges. Families and other people the children identify as important to them are involved in the care offered. Their views contribute to care planning and the children benefit from joint responses. One family member said that they loved the home because, 'We all work together to get the best for [name of child].'

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

Staff prioritise safeguarding. Staff and managers receive training to identify and respond to risk. Positive relationship-based practice is at the forefront of keeping the children safe. Staff know the children well and are professionally curious when there are changes to their presentation. Staff are proactive and take prompt action to escalate concerns when they are identified. One child said, 'I love living here, it's the place I feel safest.'

Conflict between the children is handled sensitively. Staff encourage the children to develop empathy and tolerance towards each other. They help the children to celebrate and acknowledge each other's differences. When staff identify signs of bullying, they undertake educative one-to-one discussions with the children to help them understand the consequences of their actions.

Staff use individualised incentive and reward schemes to complement the one-to-one discussions with the children. The staff use the reward systems to help the children celebrate positive behaviours and achievements. The use of rewards significantly outweighs the use of consequences. When consequences are used, they are a proportionate response. They are linked to the behaviour and are often natural learning opportunities. The children are encouraged to engage with reparative work which helps them to repair and reflect on their relationships.

Staff rarely use physical intervention. When interventions are used, they are reasonable, proportionate and necessary to keep the children and staff safe. Following interventions, staff take time to explore with the child their feelings and why the interventions were necessary. The staff records of these incidents are clear and include managers' oversight and evaluations of their effectiveness.

Staff use a range of research to explain and explore different topics relevant to the children's needs. The staff safely support the children to process and understand significant changes in their lives, including bereavements, puberty and safe relationships. Staff help the children to identify strategies they can use to keep themselves and others safe.

Comprehensive risk assessments inform staff safeguarding practices. The staff create well-informed and detailed risk management plans that help staff to understand the risks for children and to identify actions they can take to reduce risk. These plans are reviewed regularly by managers, in consultation with the children, families, professionals and staff.

When children go missing from the home, staff respond swiftly to locate them. Managers and staff work closely with relevant professionals to ensure the children's safe return. Children are encouraged to talk to independent people following incidents of going missing. However, staff do not always use information from these interviews to inform and update the children's plans.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders and managers have high aspirations for the children and staff. The manager is passionate about ensuring that the children receive a high standard of individualised care. Managers provide a positive presence, acting as role models for staff and the children. Since the last inspection, the manager has further strengthened the team, with the appointment of a second deputy manager. Leaders and Managers have a detailed knowledge of the children and the support they need.

There are highly effective systems in place to enable the manager to monitor the care for the children and to track improvements. The managers use these systems to ensure that a high quality of care and support is maintained for all the children. When managers identify gaps in the knowledge and skills of the staff, they are proactive in using reflective practice and identifying research and other resources that swiftly upskill the team.

Staff receive regular purposeful supervision. Managers reflect on the quality of supervision practice and make improvements when the need is identified. Staff say they feel valued and supported by the leaders and managers. One staff member said, 'I have been able to be the best version of myself thanks to the support I have received.'

Professionals speak highly of the support given to the children by managers. They say that they are kept up to date and that communication with the home is of a high standard. One professional said managers 'have gone above and beyond to advocate for [name of child]'. Professionals also report that staff are highly involved in the care planning for children. This means that the children benefit from expertly planned care and improved outcomes.

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

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff take account of information provided by independent return home interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)

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: Unit 73 and 74, Maple Leaf Business Park, Manston, Ramsgate CT12 5GD

Responsible individual: Sophie Wood

Registered manager: Christopher Kyte

Inspector

Georgia Carty, Social Care Inspector

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