

1266838

Registered provider: Active Ark Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private company. It provides care for up to three children who have social and/or emotional difficulties.

There has not been a registered manager since December 2020. There is a manager in post who is not yet registered.

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.

We last visited this setting on 23 February 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 March 2022

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	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 11 December 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/12/2019	Interim	Improved effectiveness
30/07/2019	Full	Good
08/03/2019	Interim	Improved effectiveness
06/06/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

A stable and consistent staff team provides children with nurturing care and support. As a result, children make measurable and sustained progress from their starting points.

Children benefit from increased stability and permanency. They move into the home, settle quickly and stay. This is helping children to develop a strong sense of security and belonging. A child's comment reflects this when they said, 'It is like living in a normal family home. I get on with all staff and trust them 100%. I class them as my family.'

The manager and staff have high aspirations for children. Children are ambitious and have clear goals for their futures. For example, a child is applying for an apprenticeship in pipe fitting and they are working hard to obtain the qualifications that they need to achieve this. Staff's consistent routines and constant praise and encouragement are helping children to engage with their education and thrive.

Staff support children to increase their independence and learn essential life skills, such as shopping, cooking and budgeting. Staff are not risk averse. They support children to take age-appropriate risks in a safe and planned way. For example, a child has developed the skills and confidence to make their own way to and from school. The staff and child are extremely proud of this achievement.

Staff are skilled at developing positive relationships with children that are based on mutual respect and trust. They know the children extremely well and invest time in listening and advocating for them. This ensures that children are actively involved in decision-making about their care arrangements and futures.

A friendly and kind staff team provides children with positive role models. However, staff's nurturing approach is not always reflected in the children's case records. For example, on occasion, staff have used stigmatising language when recording information about children. This is not helpful to children and has the potential to undermine the positive relationships that staff have successfully built.

The home is welcoming and well maintained. Children's bedrooms are personalised, which enhances a warm, homely atmosphere. However, the use of locks on the kitchen door at night is restricting children's access to all areas of the home unnecessarily.

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

Children become increasingly safer when they move into this home. This is down to staff being vigilant and having a good understanding of the children's needs and vulnerabilities.

All potential risks are thoroughly assessed and well documented in children's risk assessments. These assessments provide staff with clear and effective strategies to manage risk well. As a result, consistent safeguarding practice is being promoted effectively.

Staff are skilled at building trusting relationships with children. These relationships are ensuring that children have a caring adult who they can talk to. Children trust and respect staff and this helps them to accept staff's child-centred advice and support.

Clear and consistent boundaries are promoting positive behaviour in the home. Children thrive on staff's constant praise, encouragement and rewards. As a result, children learn how to manage difficult emotions in a safer way.

When children go missing from home, staff act swiftly and go and look for them. They report concerns promptly to all relevant professionals. This ensures a well-coordinated response when children go missing from home.

Allegations against staff are infrequent. Concerns raised about staff are reported to the children's social workers, the local designated officer and, when necessary, the police. This ensures a thorough and impartial investigation into the concerns. However, on one occasion, a member of staff subject to an allegation continued to work at the home during the investigation. The manager did not assess if it was safe for them to do so. This compromised children's welfare and safety.

The manager and staff do not report all serious incidents to Ofsted. For example, an allegation was made against a member of staff, and two serious incidents took place that required police involvement. Consequently, external scrutiny of serious concerns and staff's safeguarding practice are being undermined.

The provider does not ensure that safer recruitment practice is rigorously followed. The reasons for staff leaving previous employment that involved working with children are not routinely verified. Shortfalls in staff recruitment could lead to unsuitable people working in the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The manager was appointed in March 2021. However, his application to register with Ofsted has not been submitted. The manager is suitably experienced and extremely child focused.

The home has been without a registered manager for a significant period. The provider failed to inform Ofsted of the management arrangements as required. Poor communication with Ofsted is preventing the home's regulator from having robust oversight of the home.

The manager's oversight and evaluation of staff's practice lacks rigour. For example, shortfalls in staff's recordings and the use of stigmatising language have been left unchecked. Additionally, a number of shortfalls identified at the last inspection have not been adequately addressed.

Internal and external monitoring reports are still not being provided to Ofsted as required. The manager's quality of care review lacks evaluation or feedback from children and actions for further development. Weaknesses in the leaders' and manager's monitoring of the home are undermining the home's improvement journey.

The statement of purpose does not provide sufficient information about the supervision arrangements for staff and the independent counsellor as required.

There are some key strengths in the leadership and management of the home. The staff team is stable. Staff consistently report that they feel well supported by the manager and are happy and content in their work.

The manager ensures that staff are suitably equipped with the knowledge, understanding and skills to care for children. Staff benefit from regular professional supervision, team meetings and ongoing training. This is reflected in the high-quality care that they provide to children.

Partnership working with parents and social workers is strong. A social worker said, 'The home is managed well. The manager keeps a tight ship, supports his staff and leads from the front. He has been instrumental in improving [child's name] life.'

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— that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(b)) This relates to staff continuing to work at the home when investigations into allegations made against them are ongoing.	22 April 2022
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h)) This relates to ensuring that the manager's monitoring of incidents in the home and records are thoroughly evaluated; and that all requirements raised at inspections are adequately addressed.	22 April 2022

The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. The registered person must— keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (1) (3)(a)(b)) This relates to ensuring that the supervision arrangements for staff and the independent counsellor are detailed in the statement of purpose. Updated versions must be sent to Ofsted within the required timescale.	22 April 2022
The registered person must ensure that— children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises— is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home; is necessary and proportionate; is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21 (b)(c)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)) This relates to locking the kitchen at night.	22 April 2022
If the registered provider appoints a person to manage the home, the registered provider must, without delay, give HMCI notice of— the name of the person so appointed; and the date on which the appointment takes effect. (Regulation 27 (2)(a)(b))	22 April 2022

The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(d)) This relates verifying the reason why previous employment with children or vulnerable adults ended.	22 April 2022
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there. (Regulation 40 (4)(b)(c))	22 April 2022
The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person's report to HMCI. (Regulation 44 (7)(a)) This relates to ensuring that Ofsted receives each monthly report in a timely way.	22 April 2022
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months. In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children;	22 April 2022

the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and

any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children.

The registered person must—

supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed; and

make a copy of the quality of care review report available on request to a placing authority, if the placing authority is not the parent of a child accommodated in the home.
(Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c) (4)(a)(b))

This relates to ensuring that the quality of care review reports are evaluative; reflect children's opinions; detail any actions; and are sent to Ofsted within the required timescale.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff record information about children in an objective and non-stigmatising way. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: 1266838

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Active Ark Limited

Registered provider address: Active Ark, Unit E, Baron Way, Kingmoor Business Park, Carlisle CA6 4SJ

Responsible individual: Louise Matthews

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Marina Tully, Social Care Inspector

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