

2506856

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 and managed by a private organisation. It provides care for up to three children who may experience social and/or emotional difficulties.

At the time of the inspection, three children were living at the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted on 22 January 2019.

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 July 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	inadequate
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	inadequate
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
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There are serious and widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected and their welfare is not safeguarded.

Date of last inspection: 6 November 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/11/2024	Full	Good
25/09/2023	Full	Good
13/12/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
30/06/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

There are significant concerns in relation to the leadership and management of the home that are affecting the staff team's ability to safeguard and protect the children effectively. Serious incidents have not been managed appropriately, leaving children at risk of harm.

Care plans are reviewed but are not always updated in response to incidents and events that occur in children's lives. This leaves staff without clear strategies for managing challenging behaviour and situations.

Key-work sessions are carried out monthly. Sessions consider how children feel about living at the home and their choices in relation to activities and food. Weekly meetings should take place with each child. These are inconsistently carried out across the group of children, resulting in an unequal opportunity for children to express their thoughts and feelings.

Children are settled and are making progress in their daily lives due to the supportive relationships they have with the staff team. They attend school and college and are doing well.

One local authority recently planned for two of the children to move into foster care. The registered manager and staff team advocated on behalf of the children, who were clear that they did not wish to move from the home. This situation has since been addressed, and the children have remained living at the home, which is believed to be in their best interests. This helps children feel valued.

Feedback from professionals and families is positive. One professional commented, 'The recent work of advocacy on behalf of the boys who wanted to stay at the home was a good piece of work, and I am glad that things worked out for them.'

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

When significant incidents occur, staff do not always recognise the risks for children and fail to take appropriate action to reduce them. Staff do not follow safeguarding procedures, such as filling out the necessary documentation, informing leaders and managers, contacting placing local authorities and notifying Ofsted. This leaves children at risk.

While there are some positive interactions between children and staff, staff have not responded appropriately to reduce the risks to children when a potential risk of harm is identified. On one occasion, children have shared information about events that indicate potential harm to other children. Despite it being recorded that this should be followed up, there is no evidence of this happening, leaving a child at risk.

There are inconsistencies about where and what information is recorded, with different records containing conflicting information about the same incident. Some records minimise safeguarding concerns and serious incidents that have taken place.

Risk assessments are regularly reviewed by the registered manager, but not all known information is added, which means that the records do not contain an accurate evaluation of the risks posed to the children. The strategies to help staff mitigate risks and safeguard children are not specific, and they are not updated in response to incidents that occur. This leaves children at risk.

Children rarely go missing from the home, but when they have, they have found themselves in complex situations involving misuse of alcohol, and on one occasion, an allegation of sexual assault being made against them. Staff respond to help and support children to manage the situations, but the seriousness of some events has not been recognised by staff. This means that there is the potential for such situations to arise again, leaving children at risk.

Children say they feel safe in the home and can identify staff who they would go to if they needed help.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Leadership and management of the home are ineffective. The registered manager carries out monthly monitoring. However, some of the monitoring carried out is superficial, a tick-box approach with little impact, and where other monitoring is carried out, it is not thorough, as it does not result in staff taking action to improve the quality of care provided to the children.

The responsible individual led this inspection, as the registered manager was not present. The registered manager is either absent or only visits the home for brief periods. A recommendation from the last inspection, which stated that the registered manager should sign into the daily log to document his presence, has not been fulfilled.

The registered manager is experienced and is supported by a consistent staff team. The team attends staff meetings and receives regular supervision. However, the records do not contain any reflective practice, and there is a lack of action planning. This means that there is a lack of support to improve the quality of practice.

The registered manager is supervised by the director of the organisation due to his conflict of interest with the registered individual. Records indicate that supervision sessions take place regularly, but they are ineffective in supporting or challenging the registered manager in his role.

Several serious incidents have not been reported to Ofsted. This prevents Ofsted from ensuring that all the necessary steps are taken to safeguard children. This was raised

with the registered manager at the previous inspection, and a requirement was raised. This has not been met.

Legally required documentation from the local authority was found to be out of date and had to be requested by the inspector during the inspection. This had been raised by the registered manager with social workers but not escalated to senior managers in the local authorities to ensure that the most up-to-date information for the children is available to staff.

The registered manager has completed his quality of care review report and submitted it to Ofsted. The report lacks evaluation, and the actions do not include specific timescales and often relate to the current situation rather than being of a developmental nature.

The independent visitor has not raised these shortfalls in reports, preventing the organisation from making the necessary improvements.

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, The 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 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; promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(f)(h))	7 September 2025
*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;	7 September 2025

have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vi))	
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b)(c)) In particular, ensure that the registered manager is appropriately supervised and appraised.	7 September 2025
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; 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; a child protection enquiry involving a child— is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry) or; there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. A notification made under this regulation— must include details of—	17 July 2025

the matter; the other persons, bodies or organisations (if any) who or which have been notified; and any actions taken by the registered person as a result of the matter; must be made or confirmed in writing. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e) (5)(a)(i)(ii)(iii))	
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that each child’s relevant plans are followed. (Regulation 14 (1)(a) (2)(c))	30 July 2025
The registered person must maintain records (“case records”) for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c))	30 July 2025
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children’s home at least once each month. The independent person must produce a report about a visit (“the independent person’s report”) which sets out, in particular, the independent person’s opinion as to whether— children are effectively safeguarded; and the conduct of the home promotes children’s well-being. (Regulation 44 (1) (4)(a)(b))	7 September 2025

In particular, ensure that the independent visitor identifies shortfalls to help the registered manager and staff safeguard children.	
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; 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. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c)) In particular, ensure that there is an evaluation of the data and information and that action plans include timescales for service developments.	30 October 2025

*These requirements are subject to compliance notices.

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that children are consulted regularly on their views about the home's care to inform and support continued improvement in the quality of care provided. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 21, paragraph 4.11)

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: 2506856

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Active Ark Limited

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

Responsible individual: Louise Matthews

Registered manager: Simon Matthews

Inspector

Susan Atkinson Millmoor, Social Care Inspector

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