

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 by a private company. It provides care for up to three children who may experience social and/or emotional difficulties. The registered manager has been in post since the home was registered with Ofsted on 22 January 2019.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 18 December 2019 to carry out an interim inspection. The report is published on our website.

Inspection dates: 30 June to 1 July 2021

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 December 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/12/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
22/05/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

There is currently only one child living at this home. This child has recently moved to live at the home and has settled in well. She has already formed strong and positive relationships with staff. This has been a common theme for this home, with the small staff team working successfully with one child at a time.

Children make significant progress from their starting points. They enjoy the comfortable and relaxed atmosphere of the home. Children are encouraged to make the home their own and they soon develop a strong sense of belonging. They personalise their bedrooms to their own taste and choose their furnishings. Children also have the use of an outdoor summer house. This is where they can have fun and express their own interests and talents. This was developed as a gym by the previous child who lived at the home. However, the child currently living at the home plans to redesign this area as a hair, nail and beauty parlour.

Staff effectively promote children's learning. They are skilled in encouraging and helping children to re-engage with education. This is often after considerable periods of absence from school. This allows children a positive opportunity to get back on track with their learning.

The importance of children's health and well-being is clearly understood. Staff ensure that children register with local doctors and other health professionals. Staff encourage healthy eating and regular exercise. Because of this, children thrive and enjoy good health. Staff know that children's health is well monitored and maintained.

The home experienced considerable delay in receiving a health diagnosis for one child. This delay was due to pressure on health services caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This identified the child as having more specialised care needs. Despite this, staff provided consistent care and support for an 11-month period. This was the longest and most stable period of care that the child had experienced in recent years.

Staff support children to keep in touch with their families and friends. With government restrictions easing, it is now easier for staff to manage this. For the child who was living in the home before, visits were suspended due to the risk of infection. This was a difficult time for the child, who missed time spent with family. However, staff ensured that frequent telephone calls and video calling were available.

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

Children feel safe and well protected by staff. The child speaking to the inspector commented that she feels safe and that staff genuinely care for her. The child's social worker commented, 'Staff are keeping her safe. They supervise her well and provide really positive support. She has positive relationships with staff and wants to stay here until she is 18.'

Staff understand children's individual risks and vulnerabilities and plan for these accordingly. Children's positive relationships with staff contribute to reducing their risk-taking behaviours. For example, for one child this meant no further offending while living at the home. For another child, this meant a massive reduction in missing incidents, consequently making her less vulnerable to those who may pose a threat to her safety.

Children rarely go missing from this home. So far, when this has occurred it has not been a repeated action by the child. Staff respond quickly when this happens. Staff follow procedure and local protocols to ensure the child's prompt return to the safety of the home. Children know how such incidents concern staff and cause staff to worry about them. During a recent missing incident, the child kept in touch with staff throughout. She telephoned staff and even video called to reassure staff that she was safe and unharmed.

Children know that staff genuinely care and want them to succeed. Positive behaviour is encouraged by praise and small rewards to recognise achievements. Staff listen to children and use discussion to avoid conflict. This approach has no doubt helped avoid the need for physical intervention in this home. Restorative sanctions are occasionally used and mostly have the desired effect. These are always proportionate and understood by children to be fair.

External professionals spoke highly of the home's ability to nurture and safeguard children. One professional commented, '[Child's name] had good routines. He really felt secure here. He only had one missing from home episode. Staff were careful not to criminalise him. He was high risk when he arrived, and they were able to reduce this to medium risk within three months. He really needed a secure placement. Staff at this home did a really good job.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is confident in his role and the abilities of his staff team. He is passionate and highly motivated to improving the lives of the children in their care. The home has cared for only one child at a time. Each child has had high and complex needs that have been too challenging for some other homes. The manager has been able to successfully provide a crucial period of stability for children.

A child-centred approach is fully embedded in the running of the home. The manager and staff work closely with social workers and other professionals to ensure that children make good progress. An education professional commented, 'I

like working with [name of home]. Staff are very nurturing and child centred. They understand the child and the context of their situation.'

Staff said that they are well supported in their caring roles. The manager provides regular supervision and consultation and meets regularly with staff as a team. During the COVID-19 pandemic, staff have maintained their learning with online training courses.

Independent monitoring of the home is a clear weakness. Many reports have not reached Ofsted within the stipulated timeframe. Many visits have relied on information provided by the manager rather than independent scrutiny. This has been less than robust and has not challenged practice sufficiently.

The manager has not routinely completed or sent six-monthly quality of care reports to Ofsted. A revised statement of purpose has also not been provided. Independent monitoring reports did not highlight this. These shortfalls reduce the home's transparency with Ofsted.

The home has failed to notify Ofsted about two incidents of concern: one when the police attended the home and another when a staff member was assaulted. Both incidents were appropriately dealt with, but the manager did not believe it necessary to report them. Independent monitoring arrangements also failed to identify these shortfalls. This did not impede the care provided to the child concerned, but again failed to promote transparency with Ofsted.

Internal monitoring processes have recently improved. The manager was able to share a copy of his most recent quality of care review report that was due to be sent to Ofsted. This reflected a good understanding of the home's strengths and weaknesses.

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 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 (3)(a)(b))	9 August 2021
If the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005(a) applies to the home— the registered person must ensure that the requirements of that Order and any regulations made under it, except for article 23 (duties of employees), are complied with in respect of the home. (Regulation 25 (2)(b)) Specifically, this relates to ensuring that some fire drills are conducted during the hours of darkness and making sure that visitors working at the home are aware of the arrangements should the fire alarm sound.	9 August 2021
The registered person must ensure that the following items, which may be kept in electronic form, are kept in an accessible manner— the independent person's reports; quality of care reviews. (Regulation 38 (m)(n)) In particular, ensure that all staff working in the home have access to read these reports.	9 August 2021
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—	9 August 2021

an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(b)(e))	
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person— to inspect the premises of the home and such of the home's records (except for a child's case records, unless the child and the child's placing authority consent) as the independent person requires. 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. The independent person's report may recommend actions that the registered person may take in relation to the home and timescales within which the registered person must consider whether or not to take those actions. (Regulation 44 (1) (2)(b) (3) (4)(a)(b) (5)) Specifically, this refers to the provider making sure that the home is routinely visited on a monthly basis and robustly scrutinised, with children's files only being viewed once consent has been obtained from either the child or their placing authority.	9 August 2021
The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person's report to— HMCI. (Regulation 44 (7)(a)) Specifically, this refers to ensuring that these reports are forwarded to Ofsted within the required timescale, detailing any inaccuracies or recommendations challenged by the registered manager and/or the responsible individual.	9 August 2021

This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	
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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: Active Ark, Unit E, Baron Way, Kingmoor Business Park, Carlisle CA6 4SJ

Responsible individual: Louise Matthews

Registered manager: Simon Matthews

Inspector

Gillian Walters, Social Care Inspector

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