

2673264

Registered provider: Acorn Norfolk Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home provides care for up to two children with learning disabilities. It is operated by a national provider. The home is in the grounds of an independent school and seven other children's homes all operated by the same national provider.

There has been no registered manager since May 2023.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this home.

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 July 2023

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: 12 July 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/07/2022	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last inspection, three children have moved into the home. Currently, one child lives at the home for four nights a week during the school term. One other child has had a positive move to a larger home on the site at their own request. The child retains close relations with the staff and the remaining child at this home. One child has left the home due to a breakdown of their school placement.

Children are fully included in the decoration of the home, including their bedrooms. The house is welcoming and suited to the needs of children with autism. Children make progress with their independence skills, including meal planning and cooking. Staff know how children prefer to communicate and are skilled at supporting this. The manager ensures that targets for development include those in children's education and development plans set by the school.

Extensive planning takes place before children move to the home. Staff work closely with parents to provide a welcoming environment. They contribute to carefully considered transition plans. This ensures staff that know the children before they arrive. The staff use thoughtful and innovative communication techniques that support children to settle more quickly. The staff anticipate and meet children's needs. Children have been supported to move when they have expressed a preference to live with a different group of children, or at a larger home on this site. One child said that the manager listened to them when they gave their views on reducing staff support. The child said that they felt empowered and valued by this.

Children and staff have positive relationships. The staff know children's daily routines and structures very well and offer praise and encouragement. Staff spend quality time with children, and work to counter isolation by encouraging children to interact with their peers. This takes place using the on-site leisure facilities that include a farm and adventure playground. Children also regularly access opportunities in the local community.

Children are supported to maintain relationships with their families. Parents were positive about how staff treat them with respect and keep them updated. During school holidays, parents are offered a variety of ways to keep in touch with staff. Staff will visit the family home or meet for holiday activities to ensure that children know the relationship is ongoing. Parents say this is important in keeping the lines of communication open.

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

Children feel safe because the manager and staff provide them with stability, resulting from consistent support. One child said they trust staff because they know them and their 'social cues' so well. They said although they felt scared about a

recent move, staff support in planning, using social stories, made a positive and reassuring difference.

Staff know children's presenting risks well and have plans in place to mitigate these. These plans have been written in conjunction with relatives and professionals who know children well. However, a small number of these assessments need further detail for staff to be fully aware of the action they should take.

The manager and staff have a very good understanding of the provider's therapeutic model of care and support. They support children to manage their emotions with consistent boundaries and expectations. Staff know children well and can anticipate triggers that could lead to unsettled behaviours.

Staff use physical interventions appropriately and have had suitable training. Staff record when physical interventions take place. However, the previous manager did not always ensure that a debrief took place following any incident of restraint.

Staff record when children are unsettled. However, when children have required redirection, managers do not discuss with staff how this was done. This poses a risk that a physical intervention is not reviewed as such.

Staff understand the importance of a strong safeguarding culture. They have been vigilant to emerging risks for children and escalated concerns. Professionals said this work had been important in creating safety plans. Safeguarding matters are regularly discussed at team meetings and supervisions. Staff understand the risks to children from using electronic devices and the internet. They assess these risks proportionately to ensure safety while allowing children to enjoy the benefits.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There is currently no registered manager at the home. A new manager has been appointed and is due to start shortly. The interim manager has created a culture of inspirational leadership, with staff benefiting from a manager who leads by example. Their plans are ambitious and forward thinking but are achievable and child focused. Staff feel valued and know how their role impacts on the quality of care the children receive.

Managers are fully immersed in the day-to-day running of the home. They have a good understanding of the needs of the children and provide consistent messages to staff to encourage and develop children's independence skills. Parents know that managers advocate on behalf of the children. They trust them to have children's best interests at the core of their work. Professionals have strong, positive relationships with managers, helping to contribute to the overall sense of committed partnership working.

Managers collaborate closely with staff to ensure that they feel supported and understood. Opportunities for developing staff are identified routinely by managers, who encourage upskilling as an element of practice that is led by the team.

Mentoring is used in the team to pass on skills. Inclusivity is valued by all the staff and contributes to the strong sense of security they feel.

The staff have high levels of experience and expertise. They are all trained to work with children who have communication issues. They understand the home's statement of purpose and can explain the therapeutic model which is widely used in their work.

The managers have a good overview of the service from regularly working at the home. They clearly know the children and have internal mechanisms for monitoring progress. There is a system of reflective supervisions, appraisals and regular, well-attended team meetings. Managers are continually reviewing the strengths and weaknesses of the home, using professional curiosity to explore how to improve practice.

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 ensure that— within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate. (Regulation 35 (3)(b)(i)(ii))	21 July 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that records of restraint are kept and should enable them and staff to review the use of control, discipline and restraint to identify effective practice and respond promptly where any issues or trends of concern emerge. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)
- The registered person should ensure that staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. In particular, ensure that sufficient detail is included in assessment of these risks so that staff can prepare for and provide the right support. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)

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: 2673264

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Acorn Norfolk Limited

Registered provider address: 33 Roebuck Road, Hainault Business Park, Ilford
IG6 3TZ

Responsible individual: Peter Marshall

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Jamie Cousins, Social Care Inspector
Trudy Potter, Social Care Inspector

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