

2690420

Registered provider: Acorns to Oaks Children's Care & Support Limited

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned by a private provider. It is registered to provide care for four children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

Two children were living at the home at the time of the inspection.

The manager registered with Ofsted in April 2024.

Inspection date: 22 December 2025

Date of last inspection: 7 July 2025

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At these inspections, the inspectors evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

Staff provide children with a home that is warm and nurturing. They build strong relationships with children that help foster a sense of belonging at the home.

Children are thriving in their individual activities. This helps them explore their identities and provides them with opportunities to make new friends and have fun.

All children are attending education. Significant progress has been made for two children who were previously not in formal education. Children are developing knowledge and skills essential for their future.

The home is generally well maintained; however, some areas are worn and tired. For example, there is mould in the showers, and the upstairs bathroom floor is cracked and the fixtures worn. Despite managers raising these issues with senior leaders, they are not always addressed in a timely way. Furthermore, some staff smoke in the garden. This means that children are at risk of second-hand smoke that can have various negative health impacts, and they are being presented with smoking as a normal adult behaviour.

Staff spend time with the children and know how to support them if they are upset. This means that there are few incidents at the home and there have been no physical interventions.

Positive behaviour is consistently promoted. When consequences are used to support children's behaviour, they are restorative, focusing on restoring relationships and building responsibility.

Staff say they feel supported by managers. They are provided with opportunities to engage training specific to the children's individual needs.

Risks for the children living in the home are minimal. However, children's plans do not always include clear actions for staff to follow. Although this has not resulted in a serious safeguarding incident, on one occasion staff did not look for a child when they were missing. This means that staff responses when children are at risk are not consistent.

Incident records do not always include all necessary details. This limits managers' ability to oversee staff practice, ensure children's safety and identify opportunities for learning.

The registered manager knows the children well and is committed to their care. There is a stable staff team in place. This means children are cared for by familiar and committed staff who know them well.

Managers are strong advocates for children. For example, they challenged external professionals when one child's education was not being properly supported. This helped the child return to education, and they are now building their confidence and beginning to enjoy learning.

Oversight by leaders and managers is not consistently effective. They have not addressed the shortfalls in staff practice and gaps in the recording of incidents. This is a missed opportunity to embed a culture that is ambitious in achieving positive outcomes for children.

Staff talk to children about risk; however, there is a lack of planning to ensure conversations are specific to each child's individual vulnerabilities. Staff do not always ensure conversations take place in a timely way following incidents. This means that opportunities to help children understand how to keep themselves safe are sometimes missed.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/07/2025	Full	Requires improvement to be good
23/07/2024	Full	Good
03/10/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
07/02/2023	Full	Good

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 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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; 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)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that children's risk plan's detail all known risks for children along with clear guidance to support staff in keeping children safe. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	24 February 2026
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—	24 February 2026

helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— 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; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home (Regulation 13 (1) (a)(b)(2)(f)(h)) Specifically, the registered person must implement robust internal monitoring systems to support continuous improvements and ensure that they have oversight of staff practice. Shortfalls in staff practice and identified at the earliest opportunity to ensure continuous learning for staff and improvements for children. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— meet each child’s behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child’s relevant plans; help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; encourage each child to take responsibility for the child’s behaviour, in accordance with the child’s age and understanding;	24 February 2026

help each child to understand, in a way that is appropriate according to the child's age and understanding, personal, sexual and social relationships, and how those relationships can be supportive or harmful; help each child to develop the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitative or harmful relationship; that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2) (a)(i)(ii)(iii)(vi)(vii)(b)) Specifically, the registered person must ensure that each child is provided with proactive direct support that is planned and regularly implemented based on their individual needs, risks and vulnerabilities. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child; and enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(i)(ii)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that issues of maintenance are completed quickly and that the bathrooms are free from black mould and the fixtures and fittings are in good condition.	24 February 2026

The registered person must ensure that staff adhere to smoking policy and that children live in an environment that promotes a healthy lifestyle.	
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)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that all staff keep accurate records of any incidents including the actions they have taken.	24 February 2026

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2690420

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Acorns to Oaks Children's Care & Support Limited

Registered provider address: Suite 3, 125-129 Witton Street, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 5DY

Responsible individual: Helen Johnson

Registered manager: Stacey Richards

Inspectors

Sarah Gilbert, Social Care Regulatory Inspector
Danielle Allen, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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