

2712832

Registered provider: Ark Consultants UK Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a private company. It provides short-break care for up to four children with a physical or learning disability.

There were three children resident at the time of the inspection.

The manager registered with Ofsted in August 2023

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 July 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers requires improvement to be good

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 16 September 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16/09/2024	Full	Good
16/01/2024	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children experience well-planned introductions to the home. The manager receives important information to support the decision-making and planning for the children. Parents and professionals visit the service and speak with the manager. Children have tea-time visits to be introduced to the home, staff and other children. The decision to stay overnight is determined by individual children and how they are managing their visits to the home.

When children arrive at the home, they have smiles on their faces and seek hugs from the staff. Children are greeted by staff who are enthusiastic and talk to them about their school day. Children's preferred toys and games are available along with planned music playing in the background. Children have a choice of snacks and are given time to explore the building and their bedroom. This supports a welcome to the home that is familiar and enjoyable for the children.

The staff understand and actively promote the different methods of communication that children use. Children are encouraged to increase their use of words or symbols to communicate with the staff. As a result, children who were non-verbal are now using words to describe how they feel and choose what they want. Other children are using communication aids to voice their wishes and make decisions about their stay.

The staff promote the well-being of children while ensuring their day-to-day needs are met. Children contribute to meal planning and choose the activities they enjoy the most. The staff create structures to mealtimes that allow for play and time out to expend energy around the home. The staff are enthusiastic about the children's next evening activity or getting ready for school. This approach increases the children's participation and creates a sense of routine that is fun.

Children are supported by staff when they move on to a new placement. The manager and staff attend professionals' meetings to share important information and agree a plan for the move. New carers visit the home to complete observation shifts and work with staff who know the children well. Outreach support is offered to new placements as part of the transition planning for children. For one child, this means that they are thriving in their new home.

Parents receive regular updates about their child's time at the home. The staff share photographs and monthly journals with symbols that parents and children can understand and read together. Parents say they receive emotional and practical support during difficult times. This supports a feeling of inclusivity in their child's life and care.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Staff do not always make accurate records of incidents involving children, or share important information with others who are involved in caring for them. During one incident, a child received a potential head injury and staff were required to administer medication to help the child to calm. This information was not passed on to the child's school and staff did not seek any advice from health professionals. This left the child at risk of receiving an overdose of their medication and they did not receive any medical attention for a potential head injury. Furthermore, the records related to this incident were not child-centred and were focused on the impact of the incident on staff and not the child.

Children's personal emergency evacuation plans are not clear. They do not contain clear information for staff on how each child needs to be supported during an emergency. This could mean that children are at an increased risk of harm should they need to evacuate the building.

Leaders and managers act on information when there are concerns about a child's safety. Managers make safeguarding referrals and share information with appropriate professionals. The manager will also escalate her concerns with the local authority in order to ensure professionals are acting to keep children safe and to keep staff updated.

Staff and managers respond quickly and effectively when allegations are made about staff. The manager liaises with the local authority designated officer and completes a referral. Ofsted is updated when appropriate information is known. The staff member receives regular support from managers who recognise the emotional impact of the referral process.

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

Leaders and managers do not have effective oversight of the home. The manager and deputy complete two separate identical audits but record contradictory information. Some information is duplicated from one review to the next without any material change. There is no clarity of who is responsible for acting on shortfalls found through the audits. This raises concerns about the accuracy of information and how effective the manager is in improving the service.

Leaders and managers have not shared important information to parents and the local authority effectively. Information about staffing in the home was not shared in a way to ensure it was received and understood. Children's parents and social workers are not aware of the staffing policy or how it is being managed. This approach does not give a transparent message about the care that children receive and reduces the confidence of parents.

Leaders and managers have not adhered to the maximum number of days a child can stay in a short-break service. Consequently, they have agreed to one child receiving 117 days of care. This may impact on the availability of support to other children and means that the home is operating outside of the conditions of its registration.

The staff receive regular and effective supervision of their practice from their line manager. The children are discussed regularly so that staff can reflect on how to improve the care children receive during their stay. The staff say they feel supported and comfortable to raise concerns about issues with the manager and senior leaders.

The training and induction of new employees are effective. Managers use information from external auditors to improve supervision practice. Staff are given time to observe children, understand their plans and familiarise themselves with company policies. Training is delivered in line with the statement of purpose to support effective care for children.

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 Home's 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; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; 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)(i)(iii)(b))	20 August 2025
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))	20 August 2025

In the circumstances set out in paragraph (2), these Regulations apply in relation to a child with the modifications set out in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 5. The circumstances are that— the child is not in the care of a local authority; and the child is placed in a series of short term placements within children's homes ("short breaks"), and— the short breaks to date do not exceed 75 days in total in any twelve month period. (Regulation 52 (1) (2)(a)(b)(iii))	20 August 2025
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Recommendation

- The registered person should develop the home's effective working relationships with each child's placing authority and with other relevant persons, including parents. These working relationships will also be key to success in delivering the care planning standard. This particularly relates to informing professionals and parents about how staffing will be managed during their child's stay. ('Guide to The Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.3)

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 Home's Regulations, including the quality standards'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2712832

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Ark Consultants UK Ltd

Registered provider address: C W R Accountants, 20 Mannin Way Lancaster Business Park, Lancaster, Lancashire LA1 3SW

Responsible individual: Thomas Williams

Registered manager: Jayne Bogan

Inspector

Lee Riley, Social Care Inspector

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