

# SC023646

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

The home is owned and run by a private organisation and can accommodate and care for up to seven children with social and emotional difficulties. According to its statement of purpose, the home's primary aim is, 'to provide a safe environment where all young people's welfare is promoted, and they are cared for in a manner that helps them develop positively and progress'.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since March 2007.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

### Inspection dates: 6 and 7 December 2021

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

**Date of last inspection:** 28 January 2020

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement    |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 28/01/2020      | Full            | Outstanding             |
| 06/03/2019      | Full            | Outstanding             |
| 05/12/2017      | Full            | Outstanding             |
| 14/03/2017      | Interim         | Sustained effectiveness |

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

Staff at this home ensure children feel loved and are cared for in a family orientated environment. They go above and beyond to ensure children feel safe and happy, and have positive childhood experiences. One child asked to speak to the inspector because he felt so passionate about his time at this home and how the staff have helped him turn his life around. He said, 'This home is outstanding, they go above and beyond. It isn't just a job for staff, this is my home and family.' This is testament to the care that children experience from the consistent staff team in this home.

'Sparkle' books are created and maintained by staff with the children to capture important milestones, memories, achievements and their progress. This goes alongside a monthly newsletter which provides updates for the children, including staff's milestones, such as one staff member becoming a grandparent, and the future plans for the home, such as children moving in and out. This approach to communication with the children shows the staff take responsibility in ensuring children are informed of changes which may affect them, and that they feel proud of their achievements.

Leaders and staff teach the children to understand and process the world around them. A tremendous amount of time and research goes into gathering the right information to be presented to the children. This gives children the opportunity to explore other cultures, current affairs and the evolving historical developments in today's society. Topics are explored with the children through research and discussing historical moments in time that have had an impact on change, for example, by focusing on Black History Month. These learning opportunities for children demonstrate that staff consider how current affairs are an important life lesson, and they deliver these in a sensitive and child-centred way.

Education provision is carefully considered for each child, prior to them moving into the home. All children have made progress in their educational attainment, including one child who rarely attended school before living here and achieved 100% attendance in the last academic year. Another child who has recently moved into the home has been refused admission to the local secondary school. The registered manager has appealed this decision to the highest level and is a strong advocate for the children.

Feedback from professionals is exceptional. One social worker said, 'If I was a young person I would want to live there.' Additionally, two children who have recently moved on to adult services asked to speak to the inspector to share their views on their time living here. Their comments included, 'They helped me change my whole life,' and 'It was amazing, I would love to have stayed longer.' The registered manager has plans to use the experiences of care leavers to inform future moves for children, to provide valuable skills and life lessons.

## **How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding**

A strong safeguarding culture is embedded throughout the home and children feel safe because of this. Contextual safeguarding is an important topic for debate. Staff understand the role of this in the home and can talk about this through their research practice. Examples of regular and effective staff supervision and key working with the children further embed this practice.

Risks for children are carefully considered by the staff team before children move in. The registered manager views the team's matching practice as a key strength. Care plans and risk management plans clearly identify children's needs and are regularly reviewed and updated. This information is cascaded throughout the staff team through regular team meetings and communication updates to ensure staff know how to care for each child to best support their needs. Therefore, incidents in this home are few and far between. When they do occur, these are reflected upon and children have an opportunity through key-working discussions to explore their behaviour and how, together with the staff, they can make positive changes.

Staff support children to take age-appropriate risks and to make measured choices, in line with growing up. One child who was nervous around new travel arrangements to school was supported during the school holidays to practise the journey. This child now successfully makes this journey independently.

During the height of the pandemic, the registered manager and staff kept up to date with current guidance and met daily to discuss and plan how guidance would be shared. Children were informed of changes to guidelines sensitively and without causing further anxiety. Senior leaders actively supported the staff and children. One child who contracted COVID-19 was able to isolate in his bedroom. He used a walkie talkie with staff and received little notes with his meals containing jokes and positive messages. Some staff moved out of their family homes so that they could safely care for the children and protect their own families at the same time. The impact of this very difficult time was minimised for the children due to the exceptional efforts of, and sacrifices made by, the staff.

## **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

The long-standing registered manager and staff team are the core stability factor of this home. They make the children feel loved, safe and part of a family. Staff trust each other and have faith in the leaders and managers, and that the care that they provide is the best care for each child. Children speak highly of the staff. They describe how patient the staff are and push them to be their best.

Staff supervision is regular and effective. Research-informed practice enables this team to continually progress. There are numerous development opportunities, such as staff researching relevant standards and legislation, and presenting how they use this information to support the children at team meetings.

The registered manager has a live workforce and development plan for the staff and home. She ensures that staff training is arranged and delivered so that staff are suitably trained for their role. One child has recently moved into the home with additional needs, which were identified during the referral process. Consequently, arrangements for additional relevant training were organised promptly.

The continuing relationships that the registered manager and the staff maintain with children who have moved on from the home are an example of the excellent quality of care that they provide. Children's journeys do not stop when they leave this home. This significant factor embraces the home's intended aim to provide children with an ongoing sense of permanence and stability as they continue into adulthood.

Effective monitoring systems ensure that the registered manager has an accurate overview of the daily happenings in the home, which is fed through to senior leaders. There have been some organisational changes to the senior leadership team, and this has resulted in a review of the paperwork currently in place. The manager is contributing to this change by sharing her views and keeping the staff team up to date with the changes.

## **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:** SC023646

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Acorn Homes (UK) Limited

**Registered provider address:** Unit 73-74, Maple Leaf Business Park, Manston,  
Ramsgate CT12 5GD

**Responsible individual:** Carol Bradley

**Registered manager:** Tiffany Healy

## Inspector

Sara Stoker, Social Care Inspector

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