

SC023646

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is one of 10 owned and operated by an independent provider. It is registered to accommodate and provide care for up to seven children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in March 2007.

Inspection dates: 6 to 7 March 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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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: 5 December 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/12/2017	Full	Outstanding
14/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
29/06/2016	Full	Outstanding
03/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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, 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
6: The quality and purpose of care standard Ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6 (2)(c)(i)) Particularly, when a child struggles to look after their own environment, staff should give careful consideration as to how to help them to maintain a homely and comfortable space in which to live.	30/06/2019

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children at the home make excellent progress. A very competent and cohesive staff team helps to create a safe and productive environment that encourages children to grow and develop. Outcomes for children, from very challenging starting points, are consistently high.

Children live in a home that is spacious and well maintained. They are regularly consulted to ensure that communal and bedroom spaces meet their needs. Bedrooms have lots of personalised touches. Children are proud of the environment. They spoke animatedly about their rooms and why they liked living in the home. However, one child has great difficulty maintaining her own bedroom space. It looks sparsely furnished and worn. The manager acknowledges the need to improve this.

Children have had very fractured experiences in mainstream education. Staff recognise that children have experienced repeated cycles of placement breakdown and failure. Staff work tirelessly to find tailored solutions for children that maximise their chance of successful engagement. All children have educational provision in place and are demonstrating significant progress against set educational targets. Staff at the home work closely with the children to support them to meet their targets.

The registered manager takes great care to ensure that the placement is right for children. Evidence of careful and thoughtful planning is readily available. The team works tirelessly to avoid placement breakdown. Staff are committed to ending the cycle of placement changes that some of the children have experienced. When transitions are unavoidable, the home takes a very active role to ensure the best possible outcomes for children.

The registered manager is strongly against the use of police intervention as a behaviour management strategy. A social worker reflected that this was never used by the home. She felt that this had allowed her child to gain trust in the staff. Staff are giving this child a positive experience of care and support after several negative experiences in previous care settings.

Staff attend all looked after children reviews. Staff encourage children to take an active role. Children complete a views and wishes report before every review to ensure that they get to talk about issues that are important to them.

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

The staff work with some very complex children who have experienced significant neglect, trauma and abuse. Children feel extremely safe and supported here. Staff treat children with great empathy and understanding.

Staff have the child's history at the forefront of their thinking when assessing incidents. The organisation's health and well-being team enhances this greatly. It offers support and advice to the team to ensure that strategies reflect the needs of individual children. This results in a group of very vulnerable children being kept safe in a warm and nurturing environment.

There are negligible incidents of absence from the home and no safeguarding referrals have been required since the last inspection.

Staff show excellent understanding of safeguarding procedures. The registered manager ensures that training is regularly updated. Key issues for children looked after, such as child sexual exploitation, trafficking, county lines and gangs, are covered.

Staff maintain records to a very high standard. When staff update behaviour management and risk plans, they make direct reference to key-working sessions and incidents. Reflective learning from incidents is immediately carried over into future strategic planning for risk and behaviour management. This ensures that records have a highly personalised feel. Staff review records frequently and the registered manager maintains a strong oversight.

Children who behave negatively towards others have opportunities to reflect on the outcomes and impact of their actions. There is good evidence that actions taken by staff with children after incidents help to reduce reoccurrence.

The human resources team maintains recruitment records to an exceptionally high standard and recruitment processes minimise the risk of employing unsuitable people.

Staff demonstrate some excellent initiatives for online safety. There is strong evidence of partnership working with children to keep them safe. The fact that children are so ready to allow staff into their online worlds demonstrates a high degree of trust.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager and deputy provide excellent leadership. They inspire confidence and trust from children, staff, parents and professionals who work with the home. They have very high aspirations for all the children in their care. They recognise the impact that early years experiences have on children's development. They strive to create an environment that effectively reparents children. Children are given a chance to rebuild themselves and to experience positive love and support.

The registered manager takes very great care to ensure that the staff team members are right for the home. Staff demonstrate high standards throughout all areas of their practice. All staff focus on constant improvement. The registered manager and deputy said that they felt it was essential that they never rest on their laurels. They demonstrate a powerful commitment to finding the best possible ways of working with children.

All staff demonstrate well-developed reflective skills. Regular supervision and team meetings provide opportunities for analysis and reflection. This gives the home a feeling of one that is constantly pushing to be better and to improve their quality of care.

Staff spoke highly of training available and feel exceptionally well supported. When staff discussed their relationships with each other, there was a real sense of closeness and mutual respect. A social worker commented on this and attributed the success of her child's placement in part to the strong team dynamics.

Children have many opportunities to participate in the decision making at the home. The children chair their own house meetings. They produce minutes which the manager responds to in writing every month. The registered manager also meets with children individually on a regular basis to capture their thoughts about the home. Children were confident to engage in the inspection. They were very positive about their experiences. They spoke about all the progress that they had made. They also demonstrated strong attachments with the staff team.

Feedback from external professionals is highly complimentary. Staff develop and maintain strong links with external agencies such as the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and education providers to ensure positive outcomes for the children at the home.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: 424 Margate Road, Ramsgate CT12 6SJ

Responsible individual: David Knowles

Registered manager: Tiffany Healy

Inspector

Peter Jackson: social care inspector

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