

SC023646

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is registered to accommodate and provide care for up to seven children. According to the provider's statement of purpose, it aims to provide children with warmth and nurture and an environment where children can grow and develop. There were seven children living in the home at the time of this inspection.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since March 2007.

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 March 2024

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: 14 February 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
14/02/2023	Full	Outstanding
06/12/2021	Full	Outstanding
28/01/2020	Full	Outstanding
06/03/2019	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Staff have built trusting and secure relationships with children. They know the children extremely well and enjoy spending time with them. As a result, children have developed an appropriate sense of permanence and belonging.

Staff support children to attend school in line with their plans. Good attendance is embedded and accepted as part of the routine of living in the home. The registered manager is a strong advocate for children being in school and keeping children in their educational settings. This means that children make very good progress, especially when considering their starting points. An education professional said, 'Staff have made such a difference to the child's life.'

Staff take time to record children's memories with affection. The 'sparkle book' beautifully captures children's journeys into the home, their milestones and holidays. Staff proudly display 'news of the month' to highlight children's achievements, awards and celebrations. This recognition empowers children and positively reinforces how proud staff are of them and their successes.

Children speak highly of the activities that they do with staff. These are varied and include lots of fun and stimulating opportunities. For some children, they experience these activities for the first time, such as going on holiday. Staff also support children to attend weekly clubs such as football, basketball and police cadets. These enriching opportunities have had a significant and positive impact on children's emotional well-being and confidence.

Children's bedrooms are highly personalised. One child's bedroom is designed to feel like entering the Amazon rainforest. They have suspended ivy, a car shaped bed and artificial grass for the carpet. The child adores this space and was actively involved in choosing the theme and decoration. This approach helps children to feel listened to, safe and reassured.

Staff support children to enjoy safe and meaningful time with their families. They work in partnership with parents, carers and allocated social workers to ensure that family time is positive and in the interests of children. This approach is helping children to reconnect with important family members and previous carers.

There are locks on doors in the communal areas downstairs, such as the kitchen and lounge. These doors are always left open during the day and only closed at night when children are sleeping. The registered manager recognised that the reasons for locks on these doors required a clear written rationale and took swift action during the inspection to address this. Moving forward, the registered manager plans a monthly review of their approach to locking communal areas at night. This is to ensure that, when it is safe to do so, children can access all areas in their home.

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

Staff are well trained and informed about effective strategies used to promote children's positive behaviours. Staff provide children with stability, nurture and an environment in which they feel safe and are protected from harm. Highly effective planning by staff ensures that risks to children inside and outside of the home are minimised. As a result, safeguarding concerns and risks for children currently remain at a low level. A social worker said, 'I have seen a massive improvement in the child's behaviour since living in the home.'

Staff support children to understand their emotions using a range of social and positive behaviour targets. These targets are adapted to meet the needs of each child and are individually incentivised. One child engaged so well with this that he made great progress and achieved enough incentivised targets to buy a games console.

Staff are helping children to develop skills and strategies through excellent and appropriate role modelling behaviours. The impact of this can be seen in children's positive attitudes, an increase in school attendance and activities and a decrease in staff physically holding children to keep them and others safe. This is making an exceptional difference to the lives and experiences of all children living in the home.

The culture in the home is open, and staff actively encourage children to discuss their behaviours. The registered manager has implemented a new 'my support plan' that is helping children to develop an insight into how they behave and what strategies may help them to feel better. This, combined with staff providing children with clear, concise and appropriate boundaries, is helping children feel secure and safe.

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of the risks and vulnerabilities of children in their care. Staff also recognise and understand their roles in safeguarding children and can readily identify key external agencies that work together to keep children safe. A social worker said, 'Staff are very aware of safeguarding concerns and highlight any worries they have to us, as well as responding very well to concerns we have had.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is qualified, experienced and passionate about achieving positive outcomes for children. These qualities, paired with the skills of the ambitious and organised deputy manager, mean that the home is managed to an excellent standard and records are well written. The strength of leadership inspires a culture where staff are child-focused and committed to achieving the highest standards of care for children.

The registered manager is an effective advocate for children and understands the benefits of working collaboratively with other professionals. She challenges the professional network appropriately when she feels that more is needed to meet the children's identified needs. She promotes equality of opportunity and champions their rights. Children appreciate this. One child said, 'She [the manager] wants me to be the best version of myself.'

There is a highly effective, stable staff team that supports each other well. When there are shortages in the rota, the team always covers these. As a result, children receive consistent care from familiar, skilled and experienced staff who know them well.

The registered manager has a clear vision of empowering staff and supporting them to improve on their skills. This means that children are supported by a skilled workforce that keeps its training regularly refreshed and tailored to its professional development. A member of staff said, 'The stability and experience of managers filters down to staff and creates a platform for children to achieve.'

The registered manager and deputy manager offer excellent support to staff and provide regular and reflective supervision. This means that staff can reflect on their experiences, performance and professional development. A member of staff said, 'She is the best manager I have ever had.'

A new responsible individual has been in post since November 2023, although their name does not yet feature on the registration certificate. Before this, she worked in this organisation as a regional manager, and therefore, she has a good understanding of operational processes, policies and procedures.

The registered manager completes regular reviews of the quality of care being provided to children. However, the report of this review lacks measurable and ambitious targets in improving standards for children. The registered manager had identified this as an area of development and plans to improve on this for the next review. In practice, she has excellent oversight of the quality of care provided and knows the strengths and areas for development of the service well.

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that the report of their quality of care review includes specific and ambitious actions for children and how these are to be addressed. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.4)

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) Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Post vacant

Registered manager: Tiffany Healy

Inspector

Kelly Monniot, Social Care Inspector

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