

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	25-26/11/2015
Unique reference number	SC023646
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Acorn Homes (UK) Limited
Registered person address	424 Margate Road, Westwood, Ramsgate, Kent, CT12 6SJ

Responsible individual	David Knowles
Registered manager	Tiffany Healy
Inspector	Maire Atherton

Inspection date	25/11/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained Effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC023646

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Children and young people develop good relationships with staff that effectively support them to make good progress in all areas of their lives. They are increasingly engaging in education, reducing challenging behaviour, becoming more accepting of boundaries and learning to communicate positively.
- The staff team work effectively and collaboratively with a range of professionals, including social workers, the local police, local safeguarding personnel and local mental health agencies.
- The management team are effectively rebuilding their staff team following a period of significant turnover and have achieved this with minimum disruption to young people. Staff are deployed and trained in the light of the needs of the children and young people.
- Children and young people enjoy a wide range of activities of their choosing which also support their personal development, health and well-being.
- The arrangements for children and young people to access a telephone are not compliant with the regulations.
- Although staff can outline a sound understanding of risks to individuals and the steps to reduce these, risk management is not fully supported by detailed, written risk assessments in a number of areas, including bullying.
- Management monitoring is insufficiently evaluative and supervision for new staff is not at the frequency stated in the statement of purpose for the home.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets 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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
Subject to paragraph (5) the registered person must ensure that children are provided at all reasonable times with access to the following facilities which they may use without reference to people working in the home- (a) A telephone on which to make and receive calls in private; (Regulation 22 (3)(a))	28 February 2016
The registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children's home at least once in each calendar year taking into account the requirement in regulation 12(2)(c)(the protection of children standard); in particular ensure that the location risk assessment is available in the home (Regulation 46 (1))	31 January 2016

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- Staff should understand what they must do to prevent bullying of children by other children or adults. Staff should be able to recognise and address different types of abuse such as peer abuse, cyber-bullying and bullying in day to day relationships in the home. Registered persons must ensure that procedures for dealing with allegations of bullying are in place and staff have the skills required to intervene, protect and address bullying behaviours effectively.

(Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards April 2015, page 39, paragraph 8.16)

- Staff should continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. Where there are safeguarding concerns for a child, their placement plan, agreed between the home and their placing authority, must include details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day to day basis.
(Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards April 2015, page 42 paragraph 9.5)
- Supervision of staff practice should ensure that individual adults in the home are engaged in the safeguarding culture of the home so they understand what they would need to do if they found other staff misusing or abusing their position to the detriment of the safety of a child.

(Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards April 2015, page 43 paragraph 9.14)

- The registered person should only accept placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs as recorded in the child's relevant plans and where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children.

(Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards April 2015, page 56 paragraph 11.4)

- The registered person should have a workforce plan which can fulfil the workforce related requirements of regulation 16, schedule 1 (paragraphs 19 and 20) The plan should:
 - Detail the necessary management and staffing structure, (including any staff commissioned to provide health and education), the experience and qualifications of staff currently working within the staffing structure and any further training required for those staff, to enable the delivery of the homes Statement of Purpose;
 - Detail the processes and agreed timescales for staff to achieve induction, probation and any core training (such as safeguarding, health and safety and mandatory qualifications);
 - Detail the process for managing and improving poor performance;
 - Detail the process and timescales for supervision of practice (see regulation 33 (4) (b)) and keep appropriate records for staff in the home.

The plan should be updated to include any new training and qualifications completed by staff while working at the home, and used to record the ongoing training and continuing professional development needs of staff – including the home's manager.

(Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards April 2015, page 53 paragraph 10.8)

- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring (including under regulations 44 and 45) to ensure continuous improvement. They should be skilled in anticipating difficulties and reviewing incidents, such as learning from disruptions and placement breakdowns. They are responsible for proactively implementing lessons learned and sustaining good practice.

(Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards April 2015, page 54 paragraph 10.24)

Full report

Information about this children's home

- This children's home is one of six owned and operated by an independent provider. It is registered to accommodate and provide care for up to 8 young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/03/2015	Interim	Sustained Effectiveness
06/01/2015	Full	Good
04/03/2014	Interim	Satisfactory Progress
17/10/2013	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
Children and young people enjoy positive relationships with staff with considerable warmth evident in their interactions. Children and young people talk appreciatively of staff, they say, 'they're like my second family', 'we have a really close relationship they're really helping me,' and 'staff look out for me, they show they care by doing lots of stuff.' They actively seek out the company of staff and share day-to-day experiences, which contributes to a sense of belonging. A visiting professional commented, 'staff are very engaged...and make themselves very accessible'. Another said, 'he has a good relationship with staff, he listens to them and takes on board what they say. He has made significant progress.' Children and young people provide good examples of how their views are sought, particularly in respect of activities, and say that they feel listened to most of the time. They know that staff want to help them and understand why some of their wishes cannot be met. Children and young people know how to complain, and voice emerging concerns to staff who respond appropriately. Children and young people's educational needs are well met. Staff support their active engagement in education that reflects the needs of each individual and their ability to participate. The majority have a full time education programme, others have a reduced timetable. Staff engage those not in full time education with educational activities during the school day, with varying degrees of success. Professionals are complimentary about the work of staff to promote education. A visiting tutor reported that staff support education well, they ensure young people have the right equipment and work alongside young people to complete homework. She also found that they shared information appropriately that could have an impact on the lesson. A social worker noted, 'he was at risk of permanent exclusion recently but staff have worked with him and reinforced the need for him to engage positively at school. This has also been supported by positive reinforcement in the form of rewards which are given almost instantly so as not to lose the impact of them.' There is joint working to enable young people on one-to-one tuition to participate in some group activities as a precursor to return to school. This approach has led to a recent successful re-integration to mainstream education, with the home and placing authority working together to secure a place in the face of determined opposition from the host authority. Children and young people participate in and enjoy a wide range of activities that	

reflect their individual interests and skills. These include karate, swimming, using the skate park, walks on the beach, tobogganing, arts and crafts and roller skating. Children and young people are supported in these by staff who may also join in where appropriate to share and model a learning experience. This has proved successful. In order to engage successfully staff have enabled children and young people to manage their behaviour in the community. One social worker said of a young person, 'he is able to connect how his behaviour impacts on others and can reflect on the past. I'm impressed with the progress he has made.'

Children and young people develop cooking skills working alongside staff. Pancakes, carrot cake and red velvet cupcakes emerged from the kitchen over the course of the inspection, were presented with considerable pride and enjoyed by all. Children and young people's involvement in personal and household tasks is encouraged to good effect by the use of incentives.

Staff effectively promote the health and well-being of children and young people. One social worker observed, 'he looks physically well, it speaks volumes.' They have good access to universal healthcare which ensures that routine and emergency treatment is provided as required. Staff management of medication is sound and ensures that children and young people receive treatment as recommended by healthcare professionals. There is currently one member of the health and well-being team, an experienced mental health nurse, with action underway to recruit another full-time team member and interviews scheduled for a part-time psychologist. There is some direct work with young people taking place. Attendance at staff meetings for case discussions to assist in the development of strategies to support children and young people is not yet happening due to the current staffing levels. The worker can support staff in negotiating access to mental health services for children and young people.

Children and young people in placement sometime are learning to self-regulate, with bouts of challenging behaviour becoming shorter. Staff understand behaviour as a form of communication and try to help young people to express themselves safely. A social worker reported, 'he is now engaging with professionals and appears to be more able to manage his emotions which have led to fewer outbursts both in the home and in the school. I would attribute this to the support and emotional security and safety that the home is providing for him.'

The child-focused team meet the individual needs of children and young people well. One young person said, 'it's the first place I've been where I can be myself and no-one's judging me. I clicked with everyone, I used to think I wasn't wanted.' Children and young people recognise and can articulate the progress they have made, from the small steps to big achievements. These are celebrated by staff who share the children and young people's pleasure.

Children and young people speak very positively about the ways in which staff support all forms of contact. They particularly appreciate having consistent staff

who build relationships with family members. This works well in making contact a positive experience for all those involved.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement
Children and young people feel safe most of the time. There are occasions when the challenging behaviour exhibited by children and young people causes anxiety for others in the vicinity, at which times they may not feel safe. Although they still say, 'staff look after me here.' These feelings are also aroused when children and young people impinge on each other's personal space. Some say they can experience this as intimidating or bullying; those breaching personal space do not have the same perception of their actions. Experienced staff manage and explain these differences to children and young people. Less experienced staff are not as alert to the tensions arising from superficially innocuous gestures and so do not fully support children and young people to feel safe in these circumstances. Records relating to the management of bullying are insufficiently robust. Staff demonstrate a sound understanding of the risks that children and young people may present to themselves and others. Experienced staff are knowledgeable about the steps to take to reduce these risks and actions by these staff have been effective. For example there has been a reduction in the incidents of self-harm. Despite all the work by staff with some young people, they were unwilling to sustain changes and put themselves at increased risk though frequent missing episodes, drug misuse and criminal behaviour. In these cases staff have recognised their limitations and worked with placing authorities to move the young people on. Staff are proactive in searching for young people who go missing, have a good knowledge of the relevant statutory guidance and implement it in practice. Information provided about young people on referral is not used to its fullest capacity and formal written risk assessments do not contain enough detail. As a result not all the areas of risk and the measures to reduce these are identified in records. This does not ensure that all staff are comprehensively and consistently informed about risk management. Staff are working towards educating children and young people about, and introducing, age-appropriate risks. For example currently the only computer available is in the staff office. Staff have plans to provide one in the communal space and to work with children and young people on using it safely. Other measures include the gradual introduction of trust time away from the unit independently and a review of mobile phone access. Most children and young people are confident that staff would listen to their concerns and take action. Those who are not wholly confident say they do have access to other adults who they are sure will take action on their behalf. Not all	

children and young people have mobile phones. All children and young people have to ask to use the house phone. Privacy is restricted as the cord limits the range to the corridor outside the office.

Staff encourage children and young people to treat each other with respect. Staff have to be alert with a volatile group and changing allegiances and dynamics within this. Staff have a sound approach to behaviour management. They quickly learn the triggers for individual children and young people and react promptly. Staff respond calmly, and often their low level arousal approach achieves de-escalation. The intense episodes of challenging behaviour are reducing in frequency and duration. Staff are trained in a behaviour management method that has a physical intervention component. Children and young people see the use of physical intervention by staff as fair. They understand that staff only use it to keep the young person or others safe. The positive handling plans for children and young people do not identify the preferred physical interventions that may be used. Records of these events are generally thorough and cross reference well with other records. Staff seek the views of the young person. These incidents are monitored individually but there is limited overall analysis that may identify trends and patterns. Children and young people are involved in setting the incentives to encourage them to behave well and the consequences for unacceptable behaviour. They understand how it works and feel that is fair. A social worker commented, 'staff response to challenging behaviour is robust and as a result he is making progress, getting settled and knows the boundaries.'

Staff are trained in, knowledgeable about, and know how to implement the safeguarding policies and procedures in the home. Not all staff are familiar with the external reporting avenues available to them. The management team have established good links with local authority safeguarding personnel and share safeguarding concerns appropriately. A local designated safeguarding officer described the team as 'co-operative, proportionate and thorough' in their approach.

The systems for the recruitment of staff are robust. The application of these ensures that those working in the home are suitable to work with children and young people.

Children and young people live in a house that is safe and secure. Staff ensure that health and safety is effectively promoted through routine servicing and checks that take place as required and the addressing of maintenance issues. The information used to write the location risk assessment is comprehensive but the document itself was not available.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
There is a suitably qualified and experienced manager in post. She is ably supported by two deputies who facilitated this inspection as the registered manager was on leave. Since the last inspection there has been a significant turnover of staff team during a very difficult period in the home. Six new members have joined while eight have left. Staff are open about the difficulties they experienced, their learning and how they have moved forward, demonstrating insight and competence. Staffing levels and deployment are sufficient for the needs of the young people living in the home. Staffing resources are supplemented by other professionals working with children and young people. These include tutors and a health and well-being worker. A social worker said, 'I genuinely have nothing but praise for the staff. Any member I speak to has an understanding of X and his key workers are highly skilled and have an in-depth understanding of X which is a positive element in professionals meetings and deciding upon how X's needs can be best met. I have found the staff to have a 'can do' and proactive approach. They are willing to be creative and discuss how to best meet X's needs and are flexible in doing so which means that he has felt a valued resident of the home.' The manager undertakes regular monitoring. However the records of this do not evidence full evaluation in all areas and so miss opportunities to identify areas for improvement. This is also true of the reports by the independent visitor which do not critically evaluate the service so as to secure continual improvement. Minor concerns from young people are dealt with as they arise. Staff invite children and young people to fill in complaints/grumbles forms, but they rarely do so as they do not see it as necessary. One young person has been supported by an advocate to make a complaint to his placing authority. The three recommendations from the last visit have been met. The communal areas have been refurbished and the children and young people like the new carpets. It is a challenge for staff to maintain a homely environment when it is subject to very hard wear and tear. This remains a work in progress as children and young people are involved in and consulted on how to achieve and sustain comfortable living accommodation. Records are maintained of the actions and outcome following notifications which are made as required. Staff engage creatively with children and young people to gain, and act on where possible, their views, wishes and feelings about the day-to-day running of the home as the group resisted formal house meetings. Staff are knowledgeable about the plans for each child or young person. They effectively support young people to participate in their reviews. This can be by attending or by ensuring their thoughts are presented in the written reports. Staff and others involved with the children and young people outline the progress they	

have made since living in the home. A range of external professionals are complimentary about the staff and the work they undertake with children and young people to establish good personal daily routines achieve significant progress. They are also appreciative of the regular, good quality communication they receive from staff.

Staff encourage children and young people to feel part of the local community. They achieve this through their good use of local knowledge to regularly access community facilities and activities, determined by the interests of each individual.

After the difficult period there were no new admissions accepted in order to stabilise the existing group in the home. Staff report that subsequent admissions were fully considered. However there is a lack of documentation to evidence the decision making for recent new admissions. These are in line with the criteria outlined in the statement of purpose. The manager keeps placements under review alongside the formal processes that are in place for each child and young person. Where the behaviour of young people puts themselves and/or others at significant risk placements are reviewed to determine if the placement remains suitable or what, if any, additional measures are necessary and achievable. The management team share their decision making with the placing authority and work in partnership to effect the change required. Transitions both in and out of the home are determined by needs of the child or young person, for some these are same day plans. Staff support children and young people moving out of the home as far as possible given the range of circumstances in which this occurs. Where possible the staff work with the local authority through a notice period until a suitable alternative is found.

The management team have effectively supported a core team through a time of instability in the workforce. They have established a new team who support each other well and have developed a strong team ethos. Regular team meetings and daily handovers underpin this, demonstrate learning from previous experiences and are achieving improved consistency. Staff feel well supported by frequent informal supervision, although formal supervision for new staff is not taking place at the frequency outlined in the statement of purpose. Appraisals are up to date and are used to inform staff development. Those applying to work in the home meet some young people and their views are sought and recorded as part of the recruitment process. This good practice is not followed through in seeking the views of children and young people for staff appraisals. There is a good programme of staff training that informs their practice and promotes professional development. Recent courses include behaviour management, safeguarding, health and safety, child sexual exploitation and cyber bullying.

The lengthy statement of purpose has been updated and contains all the required information.

The staff are diligent in their completion of the comprehensive recording systems,

which cross reference well.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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 who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service 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*.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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