

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	29 June 2016
Unique reference number	SC023646
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Acorn Homes (UK) Limited
Registered provider address	424 Margate Road, Westwood, Ramsgate, Kent CT12 6SJ

Responsible individual	David Knowles
Registered manager	Tiffany Healy
Inspector	Mark Blesky

Inspection date	29 June 2016
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC023646

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- Young people in this home make exceptional progress, achieving outcomes that exceed expectation.
- Young people who previously refused school now attend, and young people who had fragmented schooling reach the highest levels of attendance. Young people demonstrate an interest in learning and understand how this will increase their life chances and opportunities.
- Healthy living is strongly promoted and results in excellent outcomes; it is driven with enthusiasm and commitment.
- Young people who had had chaotic and problematic behaviours prior to placement, have become stable and sustain good behaviour. Young people who had previously gone missing have now ceased and become settled in the home.
- Young people who had no community links or interests in hobbies and clubs now attend structured clubs. They make strong commitments and achieve in these pursuits. They increase their confidence and self-esteem and form meaningful relationships with their peers.
- Staff have created a culture of support through excellent engagement with young people. Staff understand the young people and this enables them to target and shape the support that is most beneficial for them. Care is nurturing and warm and staff manage this effectively alongside clear and visible boundaries. This enables young people to understand the expectations of them and to be supported to develop positively.
- The registered manager and staff have high expectations of the young people. They understand young people's diverse and individual needs and the importance of enabling young people to express themselves, take ownership and be investors in their own care.
- Well-managed and planned safeguarding strategies enable young people to grow up and to thrive in an environment that keeps them safe and allows them to learn about the dangers and risks that they may face. As a result, young people gain insights that will keep them safe now and in the future.
- Staff are motivated, ambitious and enthusiastic, supported by inspirational leadership that recognises the skills they have and the areas in which they need to develop. Staff feel engaged in this home, with shared commitment to improving outcomes for young people.
- Professional development is encouraged and promoted by the manager. Training programmes for staff are appropriately targeted and prioritised in

the key areas of practice. Staff value training, they are enthusiastic to learn new skills and to gain insights into understanding behaviours.

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

Recommendations

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

- Keep a record of supervision for staff, including the manager. The record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with regulation 33(4)(b). This is with particular reference to demonstrating clarity of the supervision objectives and outcomes. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)

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 eight young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
3 March 2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
25 November 2015	Full	Good
5 March 2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
6 January 2015	Full	Good
4 March 2014	Interim	Satisfactory progress

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
All young people make significant progress across all areas of their development. This is seen in improved behaviour and the progress that they are making in their education and health care. Young people with historic attachment difficulties have formed strong and resilient relationships with staff and one another. Young people call this their home. They love living here and talk about the exciting and fun things that they do. One young person enthusiastically described the home's staff as 'my second family' and expressed how the staff have supported them like a family member. Young people talk about their relationships with staff as being meaningful and important to them. As a result, young people look to staff to guide and reinforce their good behaviour. Relationships are warm and friendly. Observations during the inspection demonstrated the closeness and comfort that young people gain from these. One young person commented, 'I used to lose my temper all the time, but staff have helped me control myself. I am doing so well.' Young people are meeting, and in many cases exceeding, expectations of their progress. They have learnt to control their behaviour and they take pride in themselves. They are settled in school and now understand the value of education. Young people with histories of placement breakdowns now enjoy stability and move on from the home in a planned manner. Young people speak about feeling highly valued and knowing that the staff care about them. They are confident that their opinions and views are listened to and important to staff. They are able to see and understand how they can influence the home and their care. Some young people have less confidence in speaking in front of others at house meetings, so the manager has provided additional opportunities for them to share their views. Individual consultation with these young people provides them with an alternative platform from which to make their views known. This, along with key working, has proved extremely successful and has resulted in young people influencing their free time, hobbies, clubs and the decoration of their bedrooms. Staff understand the importance of finding interests for young people to further their self-esteem and self-worth. They persevere and, through determination, engage young people. One young person, after many attempts to engage in an interest, has now achieved county recognition in karate and is taking their red belt. This is a huge achievement and would not have happened without the sustained	

support and commitment of staff.

Young people who previously refused education now attend school, vocational training and home tuition. Those who had fragmented attendance now attend their schools, with attendance rates in excess of 95%. They have developed routines and build positive relationships with staff and peers. One young person recently sat a food hygiene exam and attained the highest result in the school. One young person was refused a school place due to his being a child looked after and 'being out of area'. The home successfully challenged this decision and he was provided with a place at a local academy. He has achieved 100% attendance and engages well in school and after-school clubs. He has made friends, whom he sees outside of school, and these friendships have a positive influence on him.

One social worker described a young person's commitment to school and education since they had moved into the home as 'remarkable'. Records of achievement and commendations for their attendance and academic achievement further demonstrate this significant progress. Young people are starting to realise that their life chances can be improved through their education.

Staff are ambitious about young people's learning and drive their education with enthusiasm and tenacity. Young people are well prepared for school in the mornings and greeted warmly and praised upon their return. Staff make it their business to know about young people's personal education plans and education reports. These are used to inform their placement plans. For example, routines for homework and learning support are integrated to their day-to-day plans and key working, further establishing the importance of their learning.

Young people are highly valued by staff who demonstrate a committed and flexible response towards meeting individual needs. For example, key workers rearrange their shift patterns to be with young people and to ensure that they have this essential support at significant meetings or events. One staff member said, 'We will support our young people, even on our days off. It is so important that they can trust and rely on us.' One young person said, 'My key worker is always there when I need them.'

Young people's health is well maintained through the prompt registration with core health services such as the doctor, dentist and optician. Some young people previously had a fear of attending the dentist and staff have worked closely to support them with this. This has resulted in these young people now regularly attending the dentist and having essential treatments to support good dental hygiene. One young person previously refused check-ups, medical examinations and therapy. Through the successful engagement of the company's health and well-being team, he now attends all medicals and displays improved behaviour through engagement with the therapeutic support.

One young person's behaviour and concerns for their post-operative care was delaying an essential operation. Through effective liaison with the hospital and nursing staff, the manager provided one-to-one staffing throughout their 8-week stay. This was a substantial commitment, which resulted in this operation going

ahead.

Young people have gained a better understanding of the importance of being healthy and of making good lifestyle choices. This is because staff have successfully promoted and instilled an understanding of the importance of looking after oneself. One young person said, 'I didn't used to know what a healthy diet was, but now I eat vegetables, fruit and not too much sugar or salt.' Creative staff approaches engage young people's interests in preparing and eating healthy meals. At the time of this inspection, European football was being televised, and staff were using different European teams to theme traditional meals. One young person said, 'In Spain, people often have paella. I had never tried it before, but I really like it. I am having it again and Spain are not even playing!'

Care planning processes, in which young people's diverse needs are evaluated and understood, fully recognise and incorporate their individual traits and personalities. For example, young people who find it difficult to manage their anger are supported through consistent and visible strategies to control their emotions.

Through effective planning staff consider how young people's behaviours may have an impact on or affect the well-being and experiences of other young people. Key working is used successfully to discuss young people's support for one another, and young people say that this helps them to live together as a 'family'.

Care plans successfully reflect young people's personal histories and cultures. The contents are rich in consultation with young people. Thus, they feel a real sense of ownership of these documents and a commitment to these plans. Young people are thus significant and visible in their own care planning, and these collaborative relationships ensure that young people and staff establish shared visions of their care. One young person said, 'I am always asked for my opinions and staff talk to me about my care plan.'

Staff understand the importance of creating a warm and nurturing environment for young people and of enabling them to influence and shape their home. This is evident from the sensitive manner in which they care for and maintain the home. Young people are regularly consulted on the presentation of the home through key working, young people's meetings and manager's consultations. As a result, young people who previously showed less regard towards their home and their surroundings now take pride in the home. They keep their bedrooms tidy and well maintained and are eager to show them off.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good

Young people talk about their safety with confidence and understanding. They are learning to understand risks and how their behaviour can increase or reduce risks. Some young people spoke about their own risk assessments and about how they have taken part in deciding on the arrangements in place to keep them safe.

One young person gave examples of their previous and current behaviours. They talked about how much safer they are as a result of the support and guidance that they have received. Another spoke about previously going missing. They now understand why this was risky and have stopped.

Staff understand young people's vulnerabilities and consider more specific risks in respect of their individual needs. Formal risk assessment procedures are well managed, demonstrating the engagement with young people and the techniques and strategies deployed by staff to keep young people safer. Regular reviews of risk assessment strategies ensure that risk management remains fluid and proactive, enabling young people to develop and grow in a safe environment.

Young people do not place themselves at risk and they do not run away or become absent from this home. The last missing episode was almost a year ago. This is remarkable, given that some of the young people went missing regularly before they came to this home. Young people said that they have no desire to go missing, there is no need to go missing and one young person said, 'If you feel like running away, you just talk to staff. They are there for you.'

Behaviour management strategies are successful because they accurately reflect young people's triggers, temperaments and behaviours. Staff know how to manage these and young people are positively engaged in this process. Staff fully appreciate the impact of physical interventions when such methods are used. They spend significant time working with the young people immediately through debriefing, and, in the longer term, through key working. Staff and young people work together to try to develop strategies to avoid recurrence. This has been very successful and has resulted in the infrequent use of these interventions. One staff member said, 'We spend a lot of time with young people, helping them develop, reassuring them and supporting them to manage their behaviour. Physical intervention is a serious matter which we all try to avoid if at all possible.'

Two young people gave examples of where key working and consultation has provided opportunities for them to talk about safety and risk. Through this consultation, young people understand their right to be safe, their right to complain and their right to be looked after appropriately.

The manager understands the value of thorough recruitment practices and the importance of ensuring that only those people considered suitable work in the home. The manager and the human resources team work together closely and effectively. This joint working ensures that all statutory checks, references and employment histories of applicants are meticulously gathered. The manager makes key recruitment decisions and uses her expertise to carry out face-to-face assessments and interviews.

At the last inspection, a requirement was made regarding the accuracy of the fire safety plan and this requirement has been met. Fire safety is well managed with regular checks on fire equipment and fire evacuation drills and all staff receive training and guidance in maintaining fire safety.

The home has embedded good practice around safeguarding matters and are well placed to build on this to improve practice further.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
This is a stable and settled home, which has sustained good performance for a significant period of time. Strong and effective leadership is consistently provided by a very experienced manager. She has been in post for 12 years and brings a wealth of expertise and knowledge to this role. She is respected and valued by staff who benefit from her supportive and inspirational leadership. She leads by example through her involvement in all aspects of the day-to-day running of the home. A young person described her as 'always being around for us'. Staff trust the manager. They feel valued and say that they would go to her with any matter whatsoever. They describe her as putting young people first and her decision-making and leadership as being very firmly focused on the young people. Frequent supervision meetings enable staff to review and develop their childcare practice. Staff said that they value supervision and find this to be a supportive and challenging forum. One stated that their supervisor is able to be objective, take an overview and help them to reflect on their practice. Although staff praise the supervision process, not all records clearly demonstrate how supervision had been used to steer and guide practice. This lack of clarity may make oversight of practice and the appraisals process more difficult. The manager regularly reviews the home's statement of purpose, and this is undertaken through consultation with staff members in supervision and with young people through their house meetings. Thoughtful consultation ensures that all staff and young people feel their opinions and views are valued. Staffing numbers and activities have recently been subject to consultation, and the changes made demonstrate the effectiveness of this process. Meaningful quality assurance is conducted through monthly visits by the external visitor, along with oversight from the manager. When shortfalls in service provision are identified, prompt action is taken to address this and to improve. Recent examples of areas for development include more frequent and thorough chasing of young people's personal education plans and the introduction of the manager's	

consultation with young people.

There have been a number of recent improvements. For example, school attendance and achievement is more closely and effectively monitored, young people have a more direct link to the manager and young people's comments and views are more actively influencing the daily running of the home.

One young person said, 'You can say anything to the manager and she will listen to you. She cares and makes time for us.' Such comments demonstrate the genuine care young people experience. Formal complaints are uncommon. Young people say that they raise matters immediately with staff and that these are then promptly and fairly resolved.

All staff are competent in their roles. They are supported by mandatory training in core subjects, which include safeguarding, physical intervention, and first aid. In addition, staff are able to undertake more specific or targeted training through consultation with the manager. One staff member said, 'We do not just get told what training we will do. We plan our training with the manager, and then it is provided.' Specific training has included managing self-harm, and preventing child sexual exploitation and radicalisation. Training focuses on staff's personal development plans and their roles and responsibilities with the young people. This ensures they have the skills that they need to meet the individual needs of the young people they care for.

The home responds positively to inspections and uses inspection reports to steer and guide practice. At the previous inspection, a young person's bedroom had not been well maintained, and staff had not intervened to ensure that it was kept in an appropriate condition. Consequently, all bedrooms are now visited daily by staff, and young people are encouraged and supported to keep their rooms in an acceptable condition. All rooms are now well maintained and therefore this recommendation has been met.

A recommendation was made at the last inspection regarding the monitoring of suspicions of bullying. The manager has met this recommendation. She has implemented a recording system whereby any suspicions or indicators of bullying are identified and addressed through key working and behaviour management strategies.

Notifications of concerns to external agencies and Ofsted are uncommon. However, when notifications are made, information is concise and clear. This provides sufficient information to describe events and the actions taken by the home in response to these events.

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 children looked after 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 that 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 that 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 whom 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 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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