

Children's homes – interim inspection

Inspection date	02/01/2018
Unique reference number	SC423617
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Acorn Children's Home Limited
Registered provider address	51 Gibson Road, Birmingham B20 3UE

Responsible individual	Waheed Ashiq
Registered manager	Jowaine Blake
Inspector	Elaine Cray

Inspection date	02/01/2018
Previous inspection judgement	Requires improvement to be good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged requires improvement to be good at the last full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has sustained effectiveness. The management and the staff team work hard to address and continuously develop the areas for improvement as identified at the home's last inspection. Primarily, the home now has a registered manager. While he has only been in post since September 2017, he demonstrates strong leadership skills and his management experience has had an immediate and positive impact on the operation of the home. The management team receives full support from the responsible individual. They acknowledge that, while all the statutory requirements from the last inspection are met, the overall improvements and ongoing development plans need more time to be embedded in order to promote sustained improvement. Prior to the new registered manager being in position, one young person did not experience a smooth transition to and from the home. At this time, the acting management team did not communicate with the responsible individual and this resulted in this young person arriving at the home with a lack of information from his placing authority. Quick intervention by the responsible individual raised concerns about the suitability of this young person's placement and an appropriate challenge to the young person's placing authority. The responsible individual's actions clearly promoted the safeguarding needs of all young people at the home, and addressed significant shortfalls in managerial practice. However, this young person experienced significant disruption in his life, after being quickly discharged within days of his arrival at the home. A statutory requirement is set, to ensure that such poor practice is not repeated. The management team has learned from the above shortfall and a clear referral procedure is now in place. All referrals are now vetted by the responsible individual, and are fully discussed with the registered manager. The most recent admission of a young person to the home shows this process is effective. The pre-placement visit to meet this young person and their previous staff, coupled with good information sharing with the young person's social worker, has ensured a	

smooth transition for this young person to the home. Individualised care planning and effective compatibility assessments ensure that young people benefit from early and ongoing stability in their placements.

Poor communication within the staff team is now being addressed by the new management team. The registered manager is extremely child focused and strategic in setting down clear expectations for staff practice. Young people now receive consistent care. They report a significant improvement in their experiences, the running of the home, their relationships with staff, and their outcomes, since the arrival of the registered manager.

Staff also speak very positively about the changes that the registered manager has made. One staff member said, 'We are now a good team. The registered manager is a good manager and has made major improvements since he came. He is direct and supportive. He is like the dad of this home. He is firm and always puts the young people first.'

Young people credit their progress and stability to the trusting and positive relationships that they experience with the managers and staff. Young people embrace the strong boundaries put in place by the management team and value the calm approach used by the staff team. Young people with a history of missing from care, drug use and significant criminal activity are now stable and their missing-from-care activities are greatly reduced. As young people grow in confidence, they access new social circles and enjoy a range of new activities.

The registered manager shows vigour and determination in addressing the previous statutory requirement to ensure that young people engage positively with education and understand the importance of learning. Arrangements in the home are much improved, as staff provide a range of activities to supplement young people's learning while they are waiting to commence their education placements. As young people's self-esteem grows due to their positive and trusting relationships with staff, they become more aware of the importance of education and want to explore ideas regarding future employment. The registered manager's liaison with placing authorities, education providers and youth offending services results in productive learning opportunities for young people while more long-term arrangements are put in place.

Improvements in the induction, training and supervision of staff give structure and focus to the developing staff team. Better and repeated induction training for new and existing staff provides all staff with a good foundation to their practice and promotes consistency of care to young people. The core training programme sets out, plans for and provides professional development to ensure that staff have the correct skills to meet young people's needs and meet the home's statement of purpose. Additional training on missing from care, the risks of drug use and emergency medical procedures equips staff to effectively understand and respond to the needs of young people currently living at the home.

The registered manager's strategic approach to driving improvement is most evident in his review and development of the procedural frameworks that have been set down for staff to follow. Procedures are clear and flow charts show staff the steps to follow in order to safeguard young people and report concerns. Staff supervision and focused team meetings set out, reinforce and review the clear expectations for staff practice. Regular review ensures that shortfalls and interventions are made in a timely and constructive manner.

Young people experience a strong sense of belonging and self-determination, as managers ensure that young people feel included in the running of the home. The new complaints packs for young people demonstrate the registered manager's commitment to ensuring that young people's views are listened to and addressed effectively. Young people clearly experience a sense of safety and confidence because they believe that they are listened to. Information that is easy to access, including details of external agencies, gives young people further confidence and safeguards, should they be concerned about their care at the home.

Recruitment processes are more robust, with more detailed verification of references and background checks taking place in order to safeguard young people.

Action taken after consultation with the local fire services ensures that all fire doors in the home are operational. Regular fire, health and safety checks ensure that all staff take responsibility for keeping young people and themselves safe.

There are no current child protection concerns at the home. The manager and staff have a good understanding of risk and the triggers for young people's behaviour. There are no concerns regarding child sexual exploitation or radicalisation in the home. Young people are now well matched; they look out for each other and there are no concerns about bullying.

The management team has a clear understanding of its monitoring responsibilities. Ongoing monthly audits are consistently carried out by the registered manager according to the regulatory framework. This process includes responding to independent monitoring reports, which are regularly received by Ofsted.

Information about this children's home

The home provides care and accommodation for up to three young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is operated by a private company.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/06/2017	Full	Requires improvement to be good
21/03/2017	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
22/08/2016	Full	Requires improvement
25/04/2016	Full	Inadequate

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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The care planning standard is that children receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. (Regulation 14(1)(a)(b))	28/02/2018

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

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 differences 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 who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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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