

# SC423617

Registered provider: Acorn Children's Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## 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.

**Inspection dates:** 13 to 14 June 2017

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,** taking into account **requires improvement to be good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **requires improvement to be good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

**Date of last inspection:** 21 March 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** declined in effectiveness

**Enforcement action since last inspection**

None

## Key findings from this inspection

This children's home requires improvement to be good because:

- The home does not have a registered manager.
- Communication between members of the management team is poor, and decisions are not fully understood by staff.
- Employment checks are not fully recorded.
- Complaints are not suitably recorded.
- Some children do not attend full-time education.
- Not all of the statutory requirements are met from the last inspection.

The children's home's strengths:

- Young people and staff maintain trusting relationships, and this enables young people to express their emotions and adapt their behaviours.
- Young people develop a wide knowledge of different cultures due to the diverse staff team working at the home.

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement      |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| 21/03/2017      | Interim         | Declined in effectiveness |
| 22/08/2016      | Full            | Requires improvement      |
| 25/04/2016      | Full            | Inadequate                |
| 11/12/2015      | Interim         | Declined in 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   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <p>The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to —</p> <p>support each child's learning and development, including helping the child to develop independent study skills and, where appropriate, helping the child to complete independent study;</p> <p>understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers;</p> <p>help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment;</p> <p>promote opportunities for each child to learn informally.</p> <p>(Regulation 8 (1) and (2) (a) (ii) (iii) (iv) (v))</p> | 18/08/2017 |
| <p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p> <p>ensures that they lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose;</p> <p>ensures that staff work as a team where appropriate.</p> <p>(Regulation 13 (1) and (2) (a) (b))</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 18/08/2017 |
| <p>The registered person must ensure that full and satisfactory information is available in relation to each individual employed at the home in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2.</p> <p>(Regulation 32 (3) (d))</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 18/08/2017 |

|                                                                                                                                                                   |            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| This is with particular reference to improving the recording of reference verification and information about gaps in employment.                                  |            |
| The registered person must ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction. (Regulation 33 (1) (a))                                                  | 18/08/2017 |
| The registered person must ensure that all employees undertake appropriate continuing professional development. (Regulation 33 (4) (a))                           | 18/08/2017 |
| The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. (Regulation 39 (3)) | 18/08/2017 |

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good**

Education outcomes for young people are varied. One young person attends regularly and enjoys the praise and rewards he receives. However, another young person cannot reach his potential due to poor school attendance. Incentive and support plans put in place by staff fail to motivate this young person to attend school. While education work is available in the home, staff fail to motivate this young person to engage in learning or understand its importance.

Young people live in a homely and generally well-maintained environment. The home offers two lounge areas, and this is useful when tensions between the young people arise and they can seek out their own individual space. Young people take pride in their bedrooms. They enjoy their own personal space and have an array of personal possessions.

Young people have a greater sense of safety since living at the home. For example, they go missing less and no longer smoke drugs or cigarettes. One young person is very proud of improvements in his behaviour. He feels settled and has greater self-esteem due to not being physically restrained, as has happened in other placements.

Support from staff enables young people to experience calmer periods of behaviour because they have more insight into the triggers for their behaviour. For example, after key-working and staff feedback, one young person now understands that he experiences calmer behaviour when abstaining from consuming high-energy drinks.

Young people make meaningful connections with staff because they know that staff understand their backgrounds and experiences. They feel understood, trust staff and are therefore able to talk about their emotions and behaviours.

Being cared for by a multi-cultural team means young people develop a wider knowledge of cultural differences. Young people are much more prepared to live in a multi-cultural society as a result of living in this home.

Young people say that they are happy at this home and enjoy positive relationships with staff. They have responded well to the work that managers and staff have put in place to combat bullying. While dynamics between the two young people remain tense at times, both are willing to attend monthly anti-bullying meetings and have discussions in key-working sessions. Behaviour and incentive charts also help young people to consider behaviours such as verbal abuse towards staff, racism and the impact of their behaviours on others.

The manager works in partnership with social workers and family members so that staff can support young people to have safe and meaningful contact. One young person now enjoys extended overnight family stays as a result of these efforts.

Young people receive good support to develop independence skills. They develop good domestic and cooking skills. As they mature and earn more trust from staff, they are proud that they can now safely manage their own free time and see this as a positive move forward as they look at transitions to living independently.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good**

Recruitment processes are in place. However, the recording of these checks is inconsistent, which compromises the safety of young people. For example, information about the verification of references and gaps in employment are not signed. In addition, the notes give little information about the action taken by the recruiting managers.

Improvements in developing clear safeguarding policies and procedures, coupled with staff training, have strengthened staff practice and routines in the home. Young people are safer as managers and staff now have clear guidance about how to identify, explore and report concerns.

Child sexual exploitation is not an issue for young people at this home, and there are no concerns about the radicalisation of young people. There are good internet safety mechanisms in place to protect young people from the risks of grooming via social networking. Staff training prepares staff to work in partnership to tackle risks of radicalisation, should concerns arise.

Ongoing developments in the care-planning framework place young people's protection and emotional welfare at the centre of day-to-day staff practice. Monitoring tools give managers and staff regular insight into the impact of their work and the progress of young people. For example, the monthly review of young people's risk management plans ensures that strategies and young people's progress are closely monitored. Levels of risk in areas such as bullying and internet use are adapted accordingly in light of

young people's progress and new emerging risks.

Risk management plans are understood by, and are meaningful to, young people as they work alongside staff to discuss and develop a greater understanding of strategies that can help them stay safer. For example, young people agree to sign mobile phone and computer agreements as they increasingly accept the need for safe internet and mobile phone use.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate**

Leadership and management is inadequate because the home has not had a registered manager for over a year. While a new manager has been in place at the home since April 2017, this individual had not submitted an application to register with Ofsted in a timely way.

Attempts to recruit and register a manager have resulted in interim management arrangements. During this period, the responsible individual and owner has spent regular time in the home to oversee the running of the service. However, communication between the managers is poor. For example, some decisions are not shared and varying views about the running of the home are not aired within the management team. These difficulties, including confusion about roles and responsibilities, compromise the effectiveness of leading and managing staff practice. For example, lack of clarity regarding staff hours, in light of a decrease in the number of young people living in the home, has caused confusion and uncertainty within the staff team.

Some staff undermine the management team's decision-making. Poor communication by the managers undermines the staff's ability to understand what is expected of them as changes arise.

New staff report satisfaction with their induction to the home and the support they receive from existing staff. The management team is clearly making improvements to the organisation, availability and monitoring of staff training. However, induction files are basic and still require improvement, and the statutory requirement from the last inspection is repeated.

Staff regularly receive supervision. However, the manager acknowledges the need for more evaluative performance management. The manager is currently implementing a new supervision format to develop this.

While the manager responds to complaints about the home in a timely way, the complaints log is disorganised and poorly recorded. For example, details about a complaint from a neighbour had to be obtained from the home's daily log, with no update in the home's complaints file.

The new manager is developing partnership working with other agencies. Independent monitoring is regular and drives improvement in the home, as the management team

works to address shortfalls. The majority of statutory requirements from the last inspection are met, with the exception of staff induction.

Monitoring systems are improving. Improvements include the development of a new quality assurance role and a new training matrix. As a result, managers are clearer about the training needs of staff. There is now an acknowledgement that while training has improved, there are still some pockets of training that are not up to date. Positively, the managers' prioritisation of safeguarding, anti-bullying and radicalisation training demonstrates the management team's ability to prioritise the safety of young people.

The management team is more aware of the shortfalls in the home, and is starting to take action to tackle these. However, it is too early for any changes to embed or for their effectiveness to be assessed.

## **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:** SC423617

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Acorn Children's Homes Limited

**Responsible individual:** Waheed Ashiq

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

## Inspector

Elaine Cray, social care inspector

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