

SC435322

Registered provider: Acorn Norfolk Limited

Interim inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is registered to provide care for up to 18 children who are on 38-week or 52-week residential placement options. There are currently 13 children living at the home. The home specialises in providing care for children with autism spectrum disorder, complex needs, moderate to severe learning difficulties, communication difficulties and associated behaviours.

There is an on-site school that is registered with the Department for Education. The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

The manager registered with Ofsted in March 2020.

Inspection date: 10 January 2022

Date of last inspection: 28 September 2021

Judgement at last inspection: 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 judged that it has improved effectiveness.

Since the full inspection in September 2021, managers have put in place an action plan to make improvements and address the requirements and recommendation from that inspection. Of the eight requirements raised, the manager has met five. Two have not been fully met so are restated. One requirement was not considered during this inspection, as the timescale for completion has not yet passed.

Managers and deputy managers of each house have been provided with additional training in relation to their management roles. This has led to improvements in monitoring of behavioural incidents, physical interventions and children's plans. Managers' reviews of incident and physical intervention records are thorough and seek to identify learning that can be taken from incidents.

Children's risk assessments are updated in response to any incidents to include any new behaviours and updated strategies. Strategies for staff to use when working with children are clearly outlined. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of children's needs and how to keep them safe.

Staff respond to children appropriately during behavioural incidents and in line with the child's plans. There have been several physical interventions. These have been appropriate and proportionate. Records of physical interventions are clear and follow-up work is undertaken through debriefs with staff and children. This helps staff to learn from any such incidents and consider how best to support children in future.

There continue to be several staff vacancies. Managers have undertaken a review of recruitment practices and this has had positive results in terms of the number of applicants for vacant roles. Since the full inspection, managers have made the decision to temporarily close two of the houses on the site due to staff shortages. This has meant that staff from these houses have been able to provide support in other houses. No children have moved in since the full inspection. These steps mean that children are being cared for by the number of staff outlined in their plans. However, rotas do not always accurately reflect who is working with children on any given day.

A review of recruitment practices is ongoing in conjunction with the on-site school. There is now an agreement in place that staff working at the school and in the children's houses will be subject to the same level of recruitment checks. However,

this work is still ongoing, to ensure that all staff are compliant with all necessary checks.

Children have positive relationships with staff, who demonstrate a good understanding of their needs. Staff use these relationships to help children develop skills, appropriate to their needs, that support them to become more independent. Some children have been helped to cook their own meals, go shopping and learn to budget. These skills help to equip children for their futures.

The home environment is well maintained and appropriate for children's needs. Children's bedrooms are personalised, and creative solutions have been found to make areas safe and appealing for children in response to specific environmental risks. Improvements have been made to the maintenance of outside areas. Children experience a good range of activities relevant to their interests. These include bicycle rides, forest school experiences and caving. One child has recently visited a theme park and another child was taken on holiday by staff to a location of the child's choice to celebrate their birthday.

Feedback from children's parents and social workers is mixed. Some parents said that there is excellent communication from staff. However, other parents said that staff can be difficult to get hold of at times. The parent and social worker of one child were not made aware of a change in accommodation for the child until after it happened. The child moved to a different house on the site, with more emphasis on equipping them with independence skills. While the child may benefit from this, not including the child's parents and social worker in the decision-making process meant that their views were not heard in relation to the move.

Staff have called for police support in response to some incidents. Some of these incidents were of a level that staff could potentially have managed without the need for police support. Managers have met with the police and are in the process of putting in place new protocols in respect of when police should be called. Managers are also sharing further information about children with police. A lack of clear guidance for staff in this area before now has meant that police have been involved in incidents when this could have been avoided.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/09/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
25/02/2020	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
08/05/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
21/11/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good

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
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans. Regulation 5 (a) In particular, ensure that decisions relating to plans for children's care are taken in conjunction with children's social workers and parents as appropriate.	24 January 2022
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a) (3)(d)) This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	21 February 2022
Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children's home. The registered person must— maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4; ensure that the records are kept up to date. (Regulation 37 (1) (2)(a)(b))	24 January 2022

In particular, ensure that there is an accurate record of persons working at the home and a true record of the actual hours worked. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	
The registered person must— supply to HMCI a copy of the quality-of-care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality-of-care review is completed. (Regulation 45 (4)(a)) This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	31 January 2022

Recommendation

- The registered person should agree with their local police force, procedures and guidance on police involvement with the home and provide staff with guidance in relation to this. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 47, paragraph 9.40)

Information about this inspection

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.

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: SC435322

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Registered provider: Acorn Norfolk Ltd

Registered provider address: Atria, Spa Road, Bolton BL1 4AG

Responsible individual: Peter Marshall

Registered manager: Vanessa Goddard

Inspectors

Joe Cox, Social Care Inspector
Tom Anthony, Social Care Inspector
Rachel Watkinson, Social Care Inspector

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