

SC474179

Registered provider: Acorn Children's Home (Burton) Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home is registered to provide care for up to four young people aged between eight and 17 years who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 14 to 15 November 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **requires improvement to be good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 12 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Young people have warm and trusting relationships with caring staff and feel that staff listen to them.
- Young people are settled, happy and consider this to be their home.
- Young people enjoy a welcoming, comfortable and well-maintained home where they can relax.
- Sensitive staff encourage and enable young people to make friendships in the local community.
- Staff have aspirations for young people, who make significant progress in their emotional and social development, education and independence.
- Child-focused staff encourage young people to engage in a range of stimulating and fun activities which support their self-confidence, physical and emotional well-being.
- When young people leave the home, dedicated staff continue to support them practically and emotionally.
- Staff keep young people safe and help them to understand how to keep themselves safe.
- Highly trained and vigilant staff search for young people if they go missing and liaise closely with other agencies to find and return them.
- Risk assessments are thorough, detailed and effective.
- The new manager has a good understanding of the strengths and area for improvement in her team. She ensures that staff receive training and regular supervision.
- Staff and young people speak positively about each other and the new manager.
- Staff liaise with a wide range of other professionals and are not afraid to challenge if needed.
- Feedback from families and professionals is very positive.

The children's home's areas for development:

- There have been significant and serious failings on the part of the registered manager, who was dismissed in August, for alleged financial misconduct. There was no negative impact on the safety of young people, but the provider should have identified the manager's behaviour at an earlier stage. The company has quickly introduced a new policy and procedures for monitoring and protecting money in the home. This now needs to be embedded in practice.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/01/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
02/11/2016	Full	Good
29/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
14/12/2015	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people are happy in placement and view this as their home. They form warm and trusting relationships with dedicated staff who understand their individual needs. The home is welcoming, comfortable and well maintained. Young people have personalised their rooms with colourful posters and bedding.

Young people get on well with staff and each other and enjoy chatting and laughing together in the home. Staff and young people sit at the dining table together for evening meals, when they talk and share experiences. Creative staff involve young people in a range of fun and stimulating activities, from baking and making wonderful costumes for Halloween, to going to the cinema, bowling and going on seaside holidays. Young people also benefit from shared activities with the young people in the other homes owned by the provider. Staff encourage them to make new friends and two of the young people are planning to meet up regularly to play music together. Staff also encourage young people to care about each other in the home. One young person has created a memory book filled with pictures and messages, for a young person who is leaving. Young people make friends at school and in the community. They attend swimming and football clubs and a performing arts school. These experiences are enriching and supporting their social development and self-esteem.

Young people feel listened to and actively engage in weekly young people's meetings, where they take it in turns to write the minutes. They express their views, wishes and feelings with confidence and become increasingly assertive. Young people have written a list of rules for the meetings, which includes that only one person is to talk at a time and that they must all respect other people's opinions.

With the support of highly skilled and child-focused staff, young people make good progress in responding to boundaries, listening and personal hygiene. All of the young people are in education. One young person, who had a history of being excluded from other schools, is making exceptional progress and is predicted A grades in her GCSEs. Another young person, who struggled to communicate with adults when he was admitted, now fully engages in conversations in the home and has demonstrated a dry sense of humour. His grandfather commented, 'I call him for a chat, this is the happiest place he has been. He is starting to grow up. They have made him a different lad, you can have a conversation with him now. He is happier since he came here.'

Young people make significant progress in developing their independence, including travelling alone on buses, managing money and using the local leisure centre. One young person, who has recently left to become independent, was supported to achieve qualifications from college. He commented that staff here have helped him 'such a lot' and that he would 'not have got anywhere without them'. He said of the support that he continues to receive from the home, 'It's proper helpful.'

Another young person, who is moving towards independence, commented that she does not need to talk to staff often, but knows that they are there to support her when she needs them. She was very positive about the home and the staff.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Highly trained, skilled and vigilant staff keep young people safe. Staff have up-to-date knowledge about child protection, missing from care, child sexual exploitation and issues like radicalisation and female genital mutilation. Staff respond quickly and appropriately when young people self-harm, ensuring that they receive medical treatment if necessary and that sharp implements and sprays are removed and secured. Staff are skilled at de-escalating situations with young people and are confident in the use of physical intervention as a last resort to calm behaviour.

When young people go missing, staff follow them and search for them. They follow clear protocols and work with the police to locate and return young people safely. Staff talk to young people after incidents to check on their well-being and to establish ways that they can prevent further incidents happening in the future. As young people develop more independence, staff support them to have free time by themselves, preparing and monitoring the young people to ensure that they remain safe.

Highly effective impact assessments have contributed to a very positive mix of young people, thereby reducing the risks to all of the young people in the home. The manager regularly reviews detailed, accurate and effective risk assessments. Staff involve young people in their risk assessments and behaviour support plans to help identify how staff can best support them to remain safe. One young person has completed her own risk assessment for going to the local swimming pool.

Staff undertake valuable key-work sessions with young people to address issues such as self-image, the consequences of running into the road, strategies to prevent self-harm, dealing with anxiety and binge-eating. Safeguarding is also included as an important element in preparation for independence. Staff encourage young people to do an online internet safety course.

Positive relationships with staff, who support young people's emotional well-being and mental health, enables young people them to better manage their emotions and behaviour. This contributes significantly to young people's ability to understand how to keep themselves safe. Young people say that they feel safe.

Staff work very effectively with the local police, placing authorities, education, health professionals and therapists to identify and meet young people's needs and enable them to become increasingly safe.

The social worker for one young person commented, 'He is safe here. Staff go everywhere with him as he's not ready to go out alone yet.' Another social worker said, 'The home is really good with her. Staff are patient and find strategies to reduce her self-harm. They keep her safe.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The registered manager was dismissed in August following some alleged financial irregularities and was replaced by the current manager. The new manager has managed the home for four months and has applied to become the registered manager. Staff

either hold a level 3 qualification or are undertaking the course. All staff are first aid trained.

The actions of the registered manager were serious and significant, but did not have a negative impact on the safety of the young people. Consequently, her relationships with young people, which were very positive, were not damaged. The financial monitoring systems in place had not been sufficiently robust to identify issues at an early stage. This has now been resolved by the implementation of a new and thorough financial policy and procedures.

The new manager has been strongly supported by the provider to ensure that young people have continued to receive a good service. She has formed warm relationships with the young people, which has also limited the impact of the loss of the registered manager for them. The rapid and child-focused response from the company has been extremely important in maintaining good standards of care and safety in the home. In order to reach good standards in leadership and management, the home needs to have a registered manager in place and the new financial procedures need to be embedded in managerial practice at all levels.

The home benefits from having good staffing levels, which provide young people with the personal time and attention that they need. No agency staff are used and the core staff provide young people with consistency and stability. The new manager has quickly got to know her team and has gained a thorough understanding of their strengths and areas for development. She addresses any shortfalls in practice and staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Staff benefit from regular supervision and a full and relevant training programme.

The new manager is very child focused and is keen to improve the service and drive up standards for young people. She prioritises listening to young people and has, for example, instigated a letterbox in her office, where young people can post any concerns or requests. The manager reads and responds to these on a daily basis. One young person uses this to indicate when she feels that she might self-harm, thereby reducing the likelihood of her doing so. The manager uses young people's meetings and team meetings to effectively communicate with everyone in the home on a regular basis.

Matching in the home is excellent and the four young people get on very well together and enjoy sharing activities and discussions. One very experienced staff member says, 'The mix of young people here is fantastic. I've never come across a company that matches so well.' This contributes strongly to the stability in the home and to the positive outcomes that are achieved by young people.

Dedicated staff have high aspirations for young people, and are proud that young people have achieved well in education and in moving on to independence. The manager and staff are highly motivated to continue their support for young people who have moved to independence, and encourage them to call into the home, and to make phone calls if they need support and advice.

Staff work with a wide range of professionals and family members. They advocate on behalf of young people and challenge when they consider that young people's needs are not being met. Staff prepare young people for their reviews, ensuring that their views,

wishes and feelings are recorded. Staff consult with therapists to ensure that they are working with young people in the most appropriate ways and to identify and meet their emotional and behavioural needs.

Feedback from family and professionals is very positive. One family member said, 'Staff are absolutely brilliant.' The social worker for one young person commented that the staff work very well with her, helping with planning for the young person and that, 'They think outside the box.'

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: SC474179

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Acorn Children's Home (Burton) Ltd

Registered provider address: First Floor Unit 3, Barberry Court Parkway, Centrum One Hundred, Burton-on-Trent DE14 2UE

Responsible individual: Rachel Dyche

Registered manager: Zara Doorbar

Inspector

Louise Whittle, social care inspector

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