

SC023645

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately operated home is part of a larger organisation which has several homes in the area. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to seven children with social, emotional and/or mental health difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted on 11 March 2021.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 November 2021

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 good

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

Date of last inspection: 19 December 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: declined in effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/12/2019	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
21/05/2019	Full	Good
19/02/2019	Full	Inadequate
24/01/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are making good progress in their lives. In some areas, such as school, children are making excellent progress. A social worker explained that one child is preparing for upcoming GCSEs, which previously was unthinkable. Staff support children to maintain high levels of attendance and engagement in education. During the inspection, there was an incident at school. Due to good communication between staff, the school and social workers, the right people were made aware, and a support plan was implemented. As a result, children were welcomed home by well-prepared staff who had organised activities to support them to stay calm and reflect on their day positively.

Children's well-being is positively promoted. Staff support children to build positive relationships with their families and other people who are important to them. Children are also supported to access services which they have previously refused, such as independent advocacy services and the provider's health and well-being team. One family member explained that it has allowed their child to 'face their demons' and build a better understanding of their past.

Most children leaving the home do so in a planned manner and continue to make progress. Children benefit from a close working relationship between staff and professionals. This helps to inform plans and ensure that children can move in line with their plans. Staff encourage children to celebrate this progress. They use individualised transition plans to creatively outline a child's experience of the home and the progress they have made. Staff reflect on a child's time at the home, and opportunities to learn are embedded. This has seen improvements in areas such as the admissions process and staff training, which has enabled children to feel valued and cared about.

The home supports children to explore their interests and build relationships with each other. Children benefit from accessing online gaming, and known risks are reduced. The well-used garden lawn is an enclosed space where children can play football and have fun. While the home has a welcoming and friendly feel and the standard of decor and maintenance is high, there are a few residual elements that feel institutionalised in nature, such as the noticeboard and doors. However, action is being taken to rectify this.

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

Children who go missing from the home receive a robust response from staff. Missing-from-care episodes have been high during this reporting period, but this is attributed to two children who have since left the home. Records show a familiar pattern of staff searching at length for children. One social worker recognised this in their feedback. They said, 'Your team went above and beyond when ensuring [name of child]'s safety and locating them.' Children have clear missing-from-care plans,

and staff can articulate those plans. This has resulted in an occasion where a child who left school without authorisation was followed by staff from the home for some distance to ensure that they did not come to harm.

Children are supported to build friendships with each other in the home. Due to dynamics between the children in the home, there have been several occasions where staff have used physical intervention. From the incidents sampled, these were low-level interventions where children were supported to move away from a peer during a dispute. Staff continually challenge negative comments from the children when disagreements occur, and key-work sessions are used to reflect on behaviours. Positive behaviour is promoted through individualised rewards, and sanctions are no longer being used in the home. This allows staff to challenge preconceived ideas and develop more socially aware behaviours.

Staff are skilled at listening to children. Children feel supported to make their feelings known informally. This has resulted in a low number of complaints in the last 12 months. When complaints are made, these are managed quickly, and staff work hard to ensure that they reach an amicable resolution. When children have alleged harm from a member of staff, the manager has taken action. Good communication with parents and professionals ensures that matters are investigated with transparency and that they come to the right conclusion. This further demonstrates how children feel listened to and valued in the home.

Staff identify the risks children face. This begins with the careful consideration of children who enter the home. The manager ensures that the risks children face are known, and communication with agencies allows the manager to ensure that the child is compatible with the children already living in the home. One social worker explained, 'They took [name of child] as a person and didn't just take on board what was written about them. They treated them as a new person and not penalise them. This has allowed [name of child] to calm and have very few issues. [Name of child] respects everyone in the home and they get that respect in return.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There is overwhelming positivity from staff, professionals, children, and their families for the management team. One child's social worker explained, 'They view these children as their family and do the best they can for them.' Parents and professionals are positive about the communication they receive from the home, and there is a dedication from staff and the managers to ensure that children continue to make progress. The passion from managers transfers to staff, which is demonstrated in the care that children receive.

The manager has successfully overseen a period of transition in the home. There has been a change in staffing, which has allowed the team to benefit from a broad range of skills and experience. Some staff have been promoted to more senior roles, which has encouraged others to develop their skills and aspirations. Staff receive a positive induction and benefit from bespoke training which is sought for issues or topics relevant to specific children. Staff enjoy training, and they reflect positively

about the quality and quantity of training available. It is not clearly identifiable when new staff are given safeguarding training at induction. However, new staff benefit from regular supervision which involves detailed discussions about safeguarding aspects of their role.

Staff feel supported in their roles. There is a clear commitment from staff to give their best for children in the home. This is because of the support they receive from the management team. One member of staff spoke of being supported sensitively earlier in the year, which has allowed them to make progress in their role. Staff benefit from good-quality supervision sessions. However, these are not always regular. Some sessions have been missed due to a lack of monitoring systems in place. This has meant that staff have not had the opportunity to learn and develop as regularly as required.

The manager has carefully considered the staffing in the home. Through robust safer recruitment processes and careful identification of training and mentoring, children have been able to benefit from a staff team which offers a broad range of skills. This has resulted in children making progress in their education, relationships and well-being. As a result, missing-from-care episodes have reduced, staff act quickly to avoid children being restrained and children are able to enjoy their time in the home with people who value and care about them.

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 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>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h))</p> <p>In particular, the provider must have monitoring systems in place to ensure that staff receive regular supervision.</p>	<p>22 December 2021</p>

Recommendations

- The registered person should detail the processes and agreed timescales for staff to complete induction, probation and any core training, such as safeguarding. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 53, paragraph 10.8)
- The registered person should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than ‘institutional’ impression. This particularly relates to the use of noticeboards and doors. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 15, paragraph 3.9)

Information about this 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: SC023645

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Limited

Registered provider address: Units 73 and 74, Maple Leaf Business Park,
Manston, Ramsgate CT12 5GD

Responsible individual: Carol Bradley

Registered manager: Blaise Clifford

Inspectors

Matt Nicholls, Social Care Inspector
Peter Jackson, Social Care Inspector

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