

2588753

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home provides care for up to six children who may experience social, emotional or mental health difficulties. The home is run by a private organisation that operates several registered children's homes.

There were three children living in the home at the time of the inspection.

There has been no registered manager since June 2024.

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 February 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 30 May 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/05/2023	Full	Good
10/08/2022	Full	Good
09/06/2021	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children are making exceptional progress. Positive, respectful and consistent daily interactions with staff underpin the children's progress. For one child, this has been key to significantly improving their ability to better manage their feelings and emotions. This has led to a massive improvement in their behaviour, and they are now able to communicate well with staff about their wishes and feelings.

Children are happy and feel supported. One child described the support that they are receiving from staff as 'just amazing', saying, 'staff actually care'. The child attributed the support they received as key to overcoming their substance misuse.

Children live in a safe, well-decorated home that feels warm and inviting. Photos of the children and staff taking part in various activities are displayed on the walls. This gives the space a homely atmosphere while reflecting the children's identities and interests. Consequently, the children have a sense of security, belonging and self-expression.

All the children are in full-time education. Most of the children are achieving and exceeding their academic goals. This is due to the encouragement and high ambitions of the staff, who want the children to do well. For one child who has been struggling at school, staff communicate regularly with school staff and advocate for the child to ensure that their needs are met. As a result, they are making progress and look forward to starting college and fulfilling their career aspirations.

Children are generally in good health. Staff help them attend health appointments and encourage healthy lifestyle choices. This support has a positive impact, promoting their overall well-being and setting a foundation for healthier habits in the future.

Staff listen carefully to the children and value their opinions. This creates an environment where the children can express themselves. Regular 'catch-up and cake' meetings provide a platform for discussing topics that are important to the children. The meeting notes are captured in a child-friendly way, ensuring that their voices are clearly heard.

Children engage in activities that they enjoy and are encouraged to try new experiences. One child felt proud after attending a week-long gymnastics camp with staff support. A child who enjoys cooking is encouraged to cook meals for the home, and their achievements when doing so are celebrated. Other activities include going to pantomimes, trampoline parks, pumpkin picking, and going on a seaside holiday. The activities provide the children with fun and memorable experiences that help improve their confidence.

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

Safeguarding processes are clear. The manager and the staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and ensure that they work together with other professionals to keep the children safe. When incidents occur, they are well managed, and necessary actions are taken to ensure that the children are safeguarded effectively.

Safeguarding is discussed regularly in meetings, ensuring ongoing development for the staff. Safeguarding records are detailed and comprehensive. A small number of reports lacked clarity; however, managers have a clear commitment to developing this area further.

Staff have positive relationships with the children and encourage open and honest communication about any concerns. This empowers the children to be honest with staff about any worrying behaviours. This approach has been vital in helping staff to keep children safe, for example by ensuring that staff have a clearer understanding of the children's whereabouts when they are away from the home.

Staff know the children well and respond to their needs effectively. When the children are missing from home, staff respond swiftly, with the children's best interests and safety at the core of decision-making. Upon their return home, the children are shown that staff care through supportive discussions. The children learn to understand why staff worry when they are missing. As a result, the number of times the children are missing from home is reducing.

Staff continually seek to understand the children's behaviour. They regularly review the support that the children receive to ensure that it is meeting the children's current needs.

Staff advocate strongly for the children and promote their safety. In one example, staff raised a concern about a situation in the child's school. This resulted in the school taking action to create a safer environment for the child.

Recruitment processes are effective. This ensures that only suitable individuals work at the home and provide care for the children. Managers understand their health and safety responsibilities and ensure that effective processes are followed.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager has applied to register with Ofsted in a timely way.

The home is managed by a manager and deputy manager who lead by setting a positive example. The managers are supportive of each other and work well together to provide high-quality care to the children.

The manager values the staff and cares for the children as if they were their own. This has created an environment where staff welfare is valued and children receive the best care.

Staff receive regular supervision and feel appreciated by managers. Additional support is provided to help boost confidence and enhance staff's skills. One staff member said: 'My value is seen.' Staff contributions to the home's development are valued, and they are empowered to make decisions independently.

Leaders and managers know the strengths of the service and the areas for development. The manager and the responsible individual know the children well and are proud of the progress that they are making. Consequently, the children are supported by leaders who make well-informed assessments of their needs and good decisions about their care and support.

Staff speak highly of leaders and managers. One social worker also reinforced this, stating that the staff and current leadership team have been instrumental in their child's progress.

Managers maintain highly effective working relationships with external professionals and partner agencies. Social workers are promptly informed of incidents. Managers are excellent advocates for children. They persistently challenge professionals to ensure that the children's rights and entitlements are met.

Professionals are highly positive about children's care. They praised staff and managers for their excellent communication, with one social worker saying: 'I cannot fault them at all.' Staff and managers were also commended for their understanding of the children's needs.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Records should be easy to understand and should provide contextual information where necessary. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: 2588753

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Sophie Wood

Registered manager: Post Vacant

Inspector

Chido Mangava, Social Care Inspector

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