

# 2682837

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

The home provides care for up to seven children who may experience social, emotional or mental health difficulties. There were five children living in the home at the time of inspection.

The home is run by a private organisation that operates several registered children's homes. The manager registered with Ofsted in June 2022.

**Inspection dates: 29 and 30 May 2024**

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| <b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account | <b>outstanding</b> |
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|   |             |
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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:** 24 May 2023

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 24/05/2023      | Full            | Good                 |
| 14/02/2023      | Full            | Good                 |

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

This is a home that provides outstanding care to children. The children are very settled and enjoy living in their home. Moves into and out of the home are carefully planned and involve the children who are already there. This helps children to settle quickly and build positive relationships with each other and staff.

The children are proud of themselves and the strong progress that they have made from their starting points. The staff know the children well and speak about the children with pride and warmth. Children are supported to maintain positive health and well-being. Staff help them to engage well in education. For some children, this has helped them move from being highly resistant to education and not attending school, to thriving in mainstream school. Children are supported to pursue their academic and career ambitions, whether these are to be a footballer, multi-trades person or physicist.

The children thrive in the care of the staff, who they feel want only the best for them. The therapeutic ethos is fully embedded in all the work that the staff do. Staff are creative in building children's self-esteem and helping children who struggle with receiving praise. This includes having a positivity jar in a child's room, full of positive comments about them, or a body outline on which staff stick nice comments about the child and their achievements.

The staff work closely with the children to help them to get along well and show empathy and care towards each other. Staff are alert to any developing friction and quickly act to help the children to resolve any issues. The children enjoy spending time with the staff and feel able to talk to them about any worries or concerns. The positive relationships between children and staff help children feel emotionally safe and secure. Consequently, the children describe a home which feels very calm and peaceful to live in. One child said, 'I trust them [the staff] like family, they are my family.' Another child said the staff 'go the extra mile for us'.

Some good friendships have developed between the children and they enjoy activities such as football and fishing, and snuggling up to watch TV together. Children enjoy a range of leisure and community-based activities that enable them to further develop their own interests, to have fun and to increase their social confidence. Staff enable children to enjoy normal childhood experiences such as planned sleepovers, school trips and hanging out with friends.

Staff encourage children to express their views, wishes and feelings and ensure that there are plenty of opportunities to do so. Children feel listened to, valued and respected. If something cannot be done, staff explain the reasons to the children. One child's social worker described staff as empowering a child to find their voice.

Managers and staff have developed effective working relationships with those people who matter most to children. Consequently, parents and family members, as appropriate, continue to feel fully involved in the child's life. One parent said, 'The staff really care.' Another said, 'It's not just a home, it's a family home and we parent together.'

The home is a high-quality environment in which children thrive. The staff help the children to make it feel their own. The children are proud of their home and enjoy welcoming their family and friends when they visit.

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

The manager and staff ensure that the children are safeguarded very well. Staff receive good-quality training in all areas of safeguarding, including sexual and criminal exploitation and keeping safe online. Staff knowledge is regularly refreshed through discussions in team meetings. Consequently, staff show appropriate professional curiosity and consistently act to ensure that children remain safe.

Staff are not risk averse and understand that taking well-managed risks is an essential part of children's development. They balance well the need to keep children safe with allowing them the dignity of age-appropriate freedoms and responsibilities, such as independent travel, going on residential school trips and having planned sleepovers with friends.

The children feel safe and are safer as a result of living at the home. The good-quality work that the staff do with the children helps them to better understand and manage risks, such as those online and the misuse of alcohol and drugs. Staff help children to develop the skills to build positive personal relationships. Children rarely go missing from the home. For some children, this is a significant improvement.

The staff work in a trauma-informed way. They understand that children's experiences inform how they react to situations and how they use behaviour as a means of communication. Clear behaviour support guidance for staff, in addition to their good knowledge of the children, means that incidents are very rare and negative behaviours significantly reduce. All staff have received training in de-escalation and physical intervention. Physical intervention is rarely used and usually only during the first few weeks when a child moves in and has yet to settle. Staff use the least intrusive method possible to keep children safe.

The children have mutually caring relationships with the staff. They say that they feel staff care for them and want the best for them. One child said, 'I 100% trust every member of staff.' The staff take the time to talk to children about tricky situations and how these could be managed better in the future. This has helped children to develop the tools and emotional vocabulary to express themselves.

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

The manager is very effective. She has high expectations of staff and high aspirations for the children. The manager knows each of the children well and speaks about them with empathy, warmth and positivity. With the support of deputy managers, she leads and inspires the staff team to deliver the home's vision of high-quality trauma-informed practice.

The staff are very well supported by senior leaders. The regular team meetings and individual supervisions are reflective and engaging. Individual supervision sessions ensure that staff remain alert to what to do in difficult situations by exploring scenarios. These help to develop staff expertise, ensuring that they feel appropriately challenged and supported.

The staff benefit from a variety of training relevant to the needs of the children in the home. The manager also ensures that all staff receive any required training specific to the needs of children moving in. Staff training is further developed and refreshed in team meetings, with a consistent drive to do better for children.

The staff feel valued and respected by the manager. As a result, there are few changes in staff. This means that children are cared for by people who know them well. The caring staff are well motivated and enjoy working at the home. This shows in their care of and attention to the children. There is a strong sense of children being at the centre of everything the staff do. The staff are proud of this and the care and support that they provide. The children recognise this care and attention. One child said, 'I was probably very lucky to get a home of this standard. The effort the staff put in is 100%.'

The manager and staff build very close partnerships with families and external professionals. The staff are held in high esteem by family members and professionals. Children's parents and social workers describe the staff in terms such as 'caring', 'excellent', 'outstanding', 'calm and composed, nurturing and professional'.

The manager is very visible in the home and provides meticulous oversight of the home. She is actively involved in the children's day-to-day care and is identified by the children as a trusted adult whom they would talk to about any worries. All incident reports are quickly and thoroughly reviewed. Notifications of any incidents are shared with appropriate partner agencies.

The one recommendation from the last inspection has been addressed and no requirements or recommendations were set at this inspection. The manager has a strong sense of what staff do well and a constant appetite for improvement through reflective practice.

## **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:** 2682837

**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:** Post vacant

**Registered manager:** Julie Scrivener

## Inspectors

Joanna Heller, Social Care Regulatory Inspection Manager  
Sharron Dormand, Social Care Inspector

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