

1183936

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a privately run children's home offering care and accommodation for up to six children and young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. Children and young people have access to a health and well-being team that provides assessment, counselling and a range of therapeutic interventions.

Inspection dates: 24 to 25 May 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 **good**

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

Date of last inspection: 6 March 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: Improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because

- Staff are successful at encouraging children and young people to engage in

their education. All children and young people attend school.

- Children and young people make good progress from their starting points.
- Children and young people receive effective care and support from staff who understand their individual needs.
- The support and guidance that children and young people receive from staff enables them to develop their social skills.
- Children and young people enjoy a large range of activities inside and outside of the home.
- Staff help children and young people to stay safe and incidences of missing from home decrease'.
- Children and young people benefit from staff promoting and rewarding positive behaviour. This approach reduces the need to give children and young people sanctions.
- Parents and professionals are very complimentary about the quality of care provided by staff at the home.
- The interim manager has a clear and positive vision for the service. She has created a greater sense of confidence among the staff team members and has improved their morale.

The children's home's areas for development

- Stabilise the workforce to ensure that children and young people have regular contact with their allocated keyworker.
- Record and track in detail children and young people's progress in all areas of their development.
- The home's statement of purpose is in need of review.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
09/11/2016	Full	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 with 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.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. This relates specifically to providing children and young people with sufficient opportunities to meet with their allocated keyworker. (Regulation 13 (1) and (2)(d)(e))</p>	31/08/2017
<p>The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1.</p> <p>The registered person must –</p> <p>keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (1) and (3)(a)(b))</p>	31/08/2017

Recommendations

- Staff must help each child to prepare for any moves from the home, whether they are returning home, moving to another placement or adult care, or to live independently. In particular, where the child is moving to live independently, this includes practical skills such as cooking, housework, budgeting and personal self-care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.27)

- Regulations 35-39 detail the records that must be kept in children's homes. All children's case records (regulation 36) must be kept up to date and stored securely whilst they remain in the home. Case records must be kept up to date and signed and dated by the author of each entry. This relates specifically to ensuring that children and young people's targets are clearly recorded. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)
- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. This is with particular reference to risk assessment reviews. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children and young people make good progress in the home. Staff are committed to improving outcomes for the children and young people and benefit from being guided by care plans that identify individualised targets. Examples include targets for educational attainment or healthy living.

Before coming to live in the home, children and young people are invited to visit. Familiarity with new peers, staff and the environment provides children and young people with reassurance. Initial key-working 'welcome' sessions further enhance the children and young people's sense of security.

The physical environment of the home is good. All statutory fire, health and safety checks and certificates are complete. Living areas and bedrooms are comfortable and well maintained. Children and young people's privacy is respected: all bedrooms have en-suite bathroom facilities. Children and young people enjoy their time preparing meals with staff and eating together. They said that they appreciate mealtimes at the large dining table. A young person said, 'It makes you feel like you are at home here.'

The children and young people have good opportunities to acquire independent living skills. They are supported to learn and develop their cooking, budgeting and independent travel skills, according to age and ability. However, there are no individually tailored independent training plans. Acquiring independence skills is important for the children and young people as they may move on to independent living.

Children and young people benefit from the use of a large garden. Barbeques, basketball and other sporting activities regularly take place. Children and young people participate in a wide variety of additional activities, both in and out of the home. Children and young people contribute to the weekly activity timetable, which includes crazy golf, movie night, arts and crafts, bowling, trips to the cinema and visiting cultural landmarks in London. One young person described the home as 'an active house'.

Staff complete baseline assessments of needs on each child and young person. The assessments clearly identify the children's and young people's needs and how staff should meet them. The in-house health and well-being team provide a detailed assessment of the children and young people which further informs placement plans. The plans provide the staff team with details of the children's and young people's wishes, routines, important relationships, education, social, emotional and health needs. However, while the interim manager and staff team understand the children's and young people's individual targets and progress, the assessments do not consistently outline how those targets will be met. This limits the staff team's ability to monitor, review and evidence the children's and young people's progress.

Staff members' comprehensive knowledge of the children and young people ensures that they receive care that meets their individual needs. For example, a member of staff could describe a young person's particular behaviour, 'I know when he is anxious because he starts to stammer. This means he needs time out.'

Children and young people receive specific help when they require it. One young person is supported with weekly art therapy. The professional art therapist wrote, 'Staff support the young person to attend,' and, '[He has] stabilised and is improving, this is positive progress that is leading to [the] young person's ability to self-regulate his emotions.'

Staff work patiently to help overcome any reluctance by children and young people to attend health appointments. As a result, children and young people make improvements in their health. One young person has benefited from improved dental hygiene. Another young person has made strides in establishing a healthier daily routine, and this has enabled them to engage in education after a history of non-attendance.

Children and young people make good progress in their learning and development. All of them attend school. Since living in the home, one young person has considerably increased his school attendance to 100%. Another young person is sitting GCSE exams. A study room is available for homework, which adds a further layer of practical support. Children and young people's attendance at school is rewarded with small financial incentives. Key workers attend termly progress meetings with tutors. This good level of collaboration with school staff helps identify any additional learning needs that the child or young person may have. As a result, the staff team is able to provide knowledgeable support with homework.

Daily shift handovers ensure that staff gain detailed and up-to-date information on the children and young people in their care. This enables staff to be aware of children's and young people's welfare, activity plans and any contact arrangements and therefore provide consistent care. Children's and young people's weekly summary reports further enhance the staff team knowledge and understanding of the social and emotional welfare of children and young people.

Children and young people have a voice in the home. They attend the monthly young people's forum and contribute to issues that affect them. For example, children and

young people's specific meal requests, such as Friday night takeaways, are swiftly actioned by staff. In addition, children and young people make future activity requests and choose films for movie night. A young person said, '[The staff] listen to you and sort things out.'

The interim manager invests time talking to the children and young people. A parent said, 'She is brilliant with the kids.' A young person added, 'She talks with you and explains stuff.' Staff described the interim manager as 'very supportive'. The interim manager said that she hopes that her knowledge of therapeutic communication will further enhance the staff team approach in supporting children and young people who have complex histories.

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

The vigilance and awareness of staff ensures that children and young people are safe. Staff understand the home's safeguarding policies and procedures and follow them in practice. Children and young people said that they know how to complain should they need to. If children and young people make complaints or allegations, staff swiftly inform parents, social workers and the designated officer. This means that the complaints process is open, transparent and known by all.

The interim manager is highly active in addressing any of the children's and young people's concerns. Complaints are accurately recorded. Children and young people are encouraged to express their views during the complaints process. This enhances children's and young people's sense of ownership. The interim manager provides the children and young people with an individualised letter explaining the outcome of any complaint. Inclusion in the home's procedures builds children's and young people's confidence.

All children and young people receive training and guidance around safe internet use and protection from cyberbullying. Structured key-working sessions provide the children and young people with additional support and advice regarding sexual health and any individual vulnerabilities. Where children and young people use tobacco, staff use key-working sessions and referrals to cessation clinics to promote healthy outcomes. A young person said, 'We talk a lot about not smoking and sexual health.'

Individual risk assessments written about the children and young people are comprehensive. Staff are effective at identifying risks and strategies to reduce risk. As a result, self-harming and episodes when children and young people go missing from the home reduce. A care professional commented that a young person is now 'absconding less with no incidences of self-harm since settling in the home'. Progress made by children and young people due to the support they receive from staff helps reduce their risk of being subject to child sexual exploitation. A local authority multi-agency panel (MAP) records that a young person's risk of child sexual exploitation has reduced since living in the home. The MAP report notes, 'The home's safeguarding is robust.'

Children and young people's individual risk assessments are regularly reviewed after any incident. However, the reviews do not clearly indicate the reasons for any change to risks. As a consequence, effective strategies and the identification of patterns of risk are not readily accessible to staff and therefore could hinder future intervention planning.

Every child and young person has a positive behaviour support plan. The plans identify their vulnerabilities and challenges and support strategies that have been put in place. Children and young people receive praise for positive behaviour. The interim manager's approach to behaviour management is through reward rather than unnecessary sanction. An appropriate rewards system is in place that has resulted in the reduction in the need to give sanctions. For example, children and young people can enjoy small financial incentives when they attend school or return home on time. A young person said, '[The staff] are keeping me on the right track.'

All staff have received training in physical restraint. Physical restraint is used appropriately and only when necessary to keep children, young people and staff safe. All incidents of restraint are recorded accurately. Children and young people are provided with the opportunity to discuss their behaviour and reflect with staff on alternative responses.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The interim manager has previously been a registered manager for other children's home settings of a similar nature. She has commenced the registered manager registration process for this home with Ofsted.

Since the last inspection, the interim manager has made good progress in addressing the previous requirements and recommendations. However, auditing of all of the children and young people's files is not yet complete. In addition, risk assessments, key-working sessions and children's and young people's monthly progress are not routinely recorded. These shortfalls do not impact negatively on the quality of care provided to children and young people.

Leaders and managers recognise that the home's statement of purpose is adapted from the registered provider's generic group statement of purpose. It is a lengthy and somewhat repetitive document. While the matters to be included in the statement of purpose are evident, the statement of purpose is not bespoke to the individuality of the home. Leaders and managers are aware of the need to review and redraft this document.

The interim manager recognises the challenge of staff vacancy levels and the impact that this has on some of the children and young people's experience of being unsettled. One young person said that the different staff on shift confused her. The young person said that she had not met her allocated keyworker on a consistent basis. Although the

staff team provides good-quality care, the young person's ability to build trusting relationships with staff is limited. Consequently, the young person's engagement with staff for support and advice is inconsistent. The interim manager robustly addressed the staffing shortfalls. As a result, there are no longer any staff vacancies. Consequently, staff morale has improved and the children and young people benefit from more consistent care.

Internal disciplinary procedures are followed when required. If further staff training is identified, this is put in place

Recruitment processes are robust, with thorough induction processes and training provided. The good application of safe recruitment guidelines ensures the selection of appropriate and competent staff. Staff training relevant to the children and young people's needs is provided. Staff receive mandatory training that is refreshed regularly in line with guidance. Training includes safeguarding children, first aid, the risks of child sexual exploitation, gangs and radicalisation. All eligible care staff are either qualified or receiving training in the Level 3 diploma in residential childcare.

Staff reported receiving good regular supervision and they attend monthly staff team meetings. Any further staff team learning needs are identified. For instance, staff recently attended a workshop that addressed care planning and quality standards. This learning ensures that children and young people receive well-informed and competent care that meets their needs. A parent said, 'I can't fault the staff.' A social worker commented, 'Staff communication is very good,' and praised their collaboration and team work.

The interim manager actively challenges placing authorities when children and young people's key information documents are missing. This ensures that care planning is accurate and appropriate to the needs of the children and young people.

Good monitoring systems are in place. The external independent visitor visits the home once a month. They produce highly detailed reports that provide a good overview of staff practice and recommendations for any areas for improvement. The interim manager addresses and actions the recommendations. This further improves the quality of care provided to the children and young people.

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 difference 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 who 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: 1183936

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Acorn Homes (UK) Ltd

Registered provider address: 424 Margate Road, Ramsgate, Kent CT12 6SJ

Responsible individual: David Knowles

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector(s)

Victoria Jones, social care inspector

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