

# 1250287

Registered provider: Acorn Children's Home (Branston) Limited

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 children who have moved following a breakdown in either their fostering or residential placement, or who are required to live away from home.

The registered manager resigned in October 2018. Since this time, the home has had three managers. The first manager applied to be the registered manager with Ofsted but withdrew his application in November 2018. The second manager came into post in February 2019 and resigned in May 2019 without becoming the registered manager. The current manager started in post in July 2019 and has submitted his application to be the registered manager.

**Inspection dates:** 20 to 21 August 2019 and 18 September 2019

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **Inadequate**

There are serious and widespread failures that mean children are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and the care and experiences of children are poor and they are not making progress.

**Date of last inspection:** 14 May 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** inadequate

### **Enforcement action since last inspection:**

At the last full inspection on 14 May 2019 the home was judged inadequate. Two compliance notices were issued. These were in respect of the safe recruitment of staff and staff training. The home was also issued with a restriction of accommodation notice. A monitoring visit was carried out on 23 May 2019. This visit resulted in one compliance notice being reissued. This related to the safe recruitment of staff. Following this visit the home had its registration suspended. A further monitoring visit was carried out on 2 July 2019. At this visit the provider was found to have met all compliance notices and Ofsted made the decision to lift the suspension and restriction of accommodation notices.

### **Recent inspection history**

<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>Inspection type</b>	<b>Inspection judgement</b>
14/05/2019	Full	Inadequate
17/07/2018	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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5(c))</p>	21/11/2019
<p>The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p> <p>develop positive relationships with them;</p> <p>engage with them; and</p> <p>take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that staff—</p> <p>ensure that each child—</p> <p>is enabled to provide feedback to, and raise issues with, a relevant person about the support and services that the child receives. (Regulation 7(1)(a)(b)(c)(2)(a)(b)(i))</p>	21/11/2019
<p>The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p>	21/11/2019

<p>help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible. (Regulation 8(1)(2)(a)(viii))</p>	
<p>The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on an understanding about acceptable behaviour.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>meet each child’s behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child’s relevant plans;</p> <p>help each child to understand, in a way that is appropriate according to the child’s age and understanding, personal, sexual and social relationships, and how those relationships can be supportive or harmful. (Regulation 11(1)(b)(2)(a)(i)(vi))</p>	<p>21/11/2019</p>
<p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff—</p> <p>assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child’s relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child;</p> <p>have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;</p> <p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child’s welfare; and</p> <p>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home’s child protection policies. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(i)(iii)(vi)(vii))</p>	<p>21/11/2019</p>
<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>21/11/2019</p>

<p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home’s workforce provides continuity of care to each child;</p> <p>understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home;</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)(c)(e)(f)(h))</p>	
<p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children’s safety.</p> <p>The requirements are that—</p> <p>full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32(1)(3)(d))*</p>	11/10/2019
<p>The registered person must maintain records (‘case records’) for each child.</p> <p>Case records must be kept—</p> <p>in a secure place after the child has ceased to be accommodated in the home. (Regulation 36(1)(2)(d))</p>	21/11/2019

\* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

## Inspection judgements

### Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Children’s overall experience and progress are inadequate. Since the suspension notice was lifted in July 2019, two children have moved into the home. One child moved in on 7 August 2019; the child was at the home for three days. During this period the child went missing from the home on three occasions. Her last day at the home was on 10 August 2019. Since this time, she has been staying with friends in another part of the country. A short-term

agreement was put in place with the child's placing authority that included staff travelling to see her daily. The support offered by the staff to oversee the child's welfare has been ineffective. Despite the manager having concerns about the suitability of this arrangement, he has failed to escalate his concerns with the child's placing authority. When the child has raised matters that concern her, the staff have failed to make referrals to children's social care in a timely way. For example, the child told the staff that she felt stressed and had returned to drinking alcohol. Despite staff receiving this information, the staff failed to make a prompt referral to the child's local authority. Staff have failed to meet her basic needs and have continued to carry out daily visits without a clear understanding of the appropriate actions needed to safeguard her in a responsible way.

A second child moved into the home on 4 September 2019. Initially staff were under the impression that the child was subject to deprivation of liberty order. The manager and staff had failed to notice that the order they were referring to had expired a day before the child had moved in. They remained unaware of this until the inspector alerted the manager to the fact that the order had expired. The new order came into force on 10 September 2019. Consequently, the manager and staff had been imposing restrictions that deprived the child of her liberty for six days without an order in place.

Despite staff providing children with regular key-working sessions, staff do not show any professional curiosity about children's experiences, welfare or safety and neither do they provide sufficiently effective support to ensure that children make progress. Children are not provided with opportunities to explore issues such as going missing from the home, sexual health, healthy relationships, self-harm and how to keep themselves safe. For example, when children have shared their views, wishes and feelings that raise concerns about their welfare, staff have failed to take appropriate action. Consequently, staff do not provide children with opportunities to understand the impact of their past experiences. This failure leaves children highly vulnerable and their welfare not protected.

Since the last inspection, the home has been refurbished and is colourful, welcoming and comfortable. Children's bedrooms are well furnished, and ready to be personalised. Each bedroom has a welcome pack, which includes information for children about how to make a complaint. However, when one child made two complaints, the manager failed to maintain a full record of the actions he had taken and the outcome. Consequently, it is unclear whether the complaints procedure is effective in helping children to raise a concern.

Not enough is done to help children who are new to the home to have a school placement found and to prepare the child for school. For example, staff fail to provide children with structured routines.

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

Both children have been in the home for a limited period. The children living in the home presently have not been there long enough to build secure or trusting relationships with the staff.

Management oversight of physical interventions continues to require improvement. When

there are shortfalls in staff practice, managers do not record how they have addressed these concerns. This means that it is not clear how staff learn from incidents and improve on their practice.

Managers and staff do not understand the importance of maintaining careful, objective and clear records. For example, when a child has self-harmed, staff have not recorded essential details. Staff have also failed to exercise their powers to safeguard the child from further self-harming by following the terms of the child's deprivation of liberty order. On one occasion staff witnessed that the child had not taken her medication. Despite staff noticing this, no action was taken. This demonstrates a disregard of the importance of the safe administration of medicines to safeguard children from potential harm.

Despite one child requiring two-to-one staffing and being subject to a deprivation of liberty order, in the first two weeks of the child moving into the home she needed to be admitted to hospital on three occasions after self-harming. When incidents occur, there is a reactive response. For instance, after a self-harm incident the manager took the decision to secure the child's wardrobe and bed in her bedroom to the wall and floor. This decision was made without any consultation with the child's social worker. At a subsequent meeting the manager informed the social worker what he had done. It then emerged that this reactive response had been tried before and had become a trigger for the child to increase her risk of harm. The manager's failure to consult the child's social worker had resulted in the child being at a higher risk.

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

The new manager has been in place for nearly two months. He has applied to be the registered manager. Although there has been a change in manager, this has not yet brought about the level of change required to ensure that children receive good-quality care. For example, the manager is ineffective at using monitoring and information systems to evaluate the quality of care being provided in the home.

Despite staff having a significant amount of training since the last inspection, there are still gaps in some staff's knowledge. For example, not all staff have received training in understanding how to support children who have a history of self-harming. They also need to be trained to manage food hygiene safely. This leaves staff without essential knowledge to recognise and to be alert to any signs that might indicate that a child is at risk of harm.

Staff rotas do not show all the staff on duty on any given day. For example, new members of staff who are doing shadow shifts are not included in the records. This means that leaders and managers cannot be assured of who has had day-to-day contact with children.

Managers fail to ensure that safe recruitment checks are carried out in line with regulation, despite this being raised at previous inspections. This demonstrates a disregard of the importance of maintaining robust recruitment practice and to minimise any potential risk of children being harmed.

Medical records for a child who has left the home have been left in an unlocked cabinet in

the laundry. No consideration has been given to the confidentiality of these records. This is a failure to protect children's rights to have their personal information securely archived.

The home is currently moving to an electronic recording system. However, during transition from the present system, some records remain in paper form. This has resulted in some records not being accurate and they cannot be fully relied upon.

Staff receive monthly supervision in line with the home's policy. This provides staff with the opportunity to receive regular feedback on their practice.

## **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:** 1250287

**Provision sub-type:** children's home

**Registered provider:** Acorn children's Home (Branston) Limited

**Registered provider address:** Claremont House, 223 Branston Road, Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire DE14 3BT

**Responsible individual:** Farzana Khan

**Registered manager:** vacant post

## Inspectors

Sarah Junor-Fitzpatrick, social care inspector

Louise Whittle, social care inspector

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