

SC066912

Registered provider: Oracle Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home provides care and accommodation for up to two children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The provider also offers education and therapeutic services. The home is operated by a private provider.

Inspection dates: 7 to 8 August 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 1 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home requires improvement to be good because:

- The home has been without a registered manager since February 2017.
- Staff do not ensure that risk assessments provide sufficient detail to manage and reduce known risks and continually promote young people's safety.
- There is a lack of necessary skills and experience in the staff team. The majority of staff have yet to complete relevant qualifications.
- Staff do not ensure that independent living plans take account of young people's emotional needs and the support they may require.
- Staff use electronic monitoring systems, such as bedroom door alarms, without reviewing whether this measure is proportionate and necessary to keep young people safe.
- Gaps in young people's records mean that staff do not have all the relevant information to provide young people with personalised care.
- Managers do not review the risk assessment to determine the ongoing suitability of the home's location.
- Monitoring systems do not sufficiently review the quality of care that young people receive, or take account of their views or opinions.

The children's home's strengths:

- Young people benefit from immediate access to the organisation's own school. This means that young people are able to continue with their learning from the point of admission.
- In the absence of a registered manager, arrangements are in place to ensure that staff continue to receive regular formal supervision to monitor their practice.
- Young people enjoy a range of activities that enable them to build their confidence, learn new skills and have fun.
- Staff support young people to stay in touch with people who are important to them.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
24/05/2016	Full	Requires improvement
07/10/2015	Full	Good
29/06/2015	Full	Inadequate

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
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff— 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; and help each child to understand how to keep safe. (Regulation 12(1) and (2)(a)(i)(ii))	13/10/2017
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13(1)(b)(2)(c))	13/10/2017
The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children; and the monitoring or surveillance is no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child's need for privacy. (Regulation 24(1)(a)(d))	13/10/2017
The registered provider must appoint a person to manage the children's home if there is no registered manager in respect of the home. If the registered provider appoints a person to manage the home, the registered provider must, without delay, give HMCI notice of the name of the person so appointed; and the date on which the appointment takes effect. (Regulation 27(1)(a)(2)(a)(b))	13/10/2017
The registered person must maintain records ("case records")	13/10/2017

for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; and are kept up to date. (Regulation 36(1)(a)(b))	
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children (“a quality of care review”) at least once every six months. In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children’s home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. (Regulation 45(1)(2)(a)(b)(c))	13/10/2017
The registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children’s home at least once in each calendar year taking into account the requirement in regulation 12(2)(c) (the protection of children standard). (Regulation 46(1))	13/10/2017

Recommendations

- Ensure that staff build a positive relationship with each child and help the child develop skills to have positive relationships with others. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 38, paragraph 8.6)
- Ensure that each child’s transition is planned and helps each child to prepare for leaving both practically and emotionally. (‘Guide to the children’s homes regulations including the quality standards’, page 57, paragraph 11.9)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Young people’s experiences and progress are variable. Since the last inspection, two young people have moved on from the home. Both young people were long-term residents; however, their discharges were the result of significant periods of crisis. Although both young people made some developmental progress, this was limited.

Staff do not keep internal records, care plans or support plans up to date. Case files for both previous and current young people do not include all necessary information and

documentation. This means that staff do not have a complete overview of young people's backgrounds and personal circumstances. Consequently, internal support plans devised by staff do not reflect the aims and objectives of the placing authorities, or help staff to deliver individualised care and support. This shortfall remains outstanding from the last inspection.

Staff endeavour to forge positive and sustainable relationships with young people. On occasion, these relationships enable staff to support young people to reflect on their past experiences. However, historically there were some instances when the familiarity of these relationships confused young people. For example, some young people who have now left the home struggled to distinguish between friendship and professional support. This is because some staff did not ensure that relationship boundaries were clear.

Young people benefit from easy access to the organisation's own school. This means that when young people arrive at the home they are able to continue with their learning or to re-engage in education. Care staff assist teaching staff to complete initial education and learning assessments within days of a young person's admission. Subsequently, when young people start school again, they receive bespoke support that reflects their learning and behavioural needs.

Staff develop professional relationships with various primary and specialist health services, such as mental health therapists and drug and alcohol professionals. This ensures that young people can access the all-round health care support that they need.

Staff consult with young people about day-to-day decisions in the home, such as activity planning. Young people say that they enjoy the wide range of activities on offer. These opportunities help young people to develop new skills and gain confidence in their abilities. Staff encourage young people to attend their statutory review meetings and to express their views about their future care and support needs. This means that young people are involved in decisions about their current and future care.

Staff understand the importance of supporting young people to develop and maintain positive relationships with people who are important to them, when appropriate. They work with placing authorities, young people and their families to support agreed contact plans and facilitate visits. This means that young people are not isolated from their families.

Teaching young people independence living skills as they move towards adulthood is a key aim of the service. Staff include age-appropriate independence tasks, such as budgeting, shopping and cooking, into transition plans. The emphasis on teaching practical skills means that staff do not take sufficient action to assess if young people have the necessary emotional resilience to live independently. This reduces the potential success of these plans in preparing young people for the next stage of their lives.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Staff competently identify risk, and work in partnership with other agencies, such as police teams and youth offending teams. However, staff do not ensure that they regularly review and revise internal risk management plans. When young people's behaviours change, staff note these changes but do not evaluate the possible impact of these changes on young people's safety and the safety of others. Staff do not take sufficient steps to help young people to understand and recognise how to keep themselves safe. This means that young people are not motivated to change their behaviours or to consider the possible wider implications of their actions, such as the possibility of criminal charges.

Young people currently living in the home do not go missing. Young people who have moved on did go missing from the home on a number of occasions. In these circumstances, staff liaised with specialist police teams to locate the young people. However, the risk assessments that staff devised to protect these young people when they were away from the home were confusing and contradictory. As a result, staff responses to these missing-from-home incidents were inconsistent. This failure compromised the safety of these young people.

Staff monitor young people's movements around the home through the use of bedroom door alarms. The use of these alarms is custom and practice in the home, and young people are subject to this restriction regardless of the risks, if any, that they may pose to themselves or others. This is an unnecessary intrusion on their privacy because staff do not assess if this restriction is necessary to keep young people safe.

The use of physical restraint is rare. Staff only use this measure of control as a last resort to protect young people from an immediate risk of harm. Staff complete records of these events in detail and include all necessary information. These records enable senior staff and the responsible individual to review all incidents of restraint. As a result, they make sure that these records reflect the behaviour management policy of the home and young people's individual plans. This approach promotes young people's welfare and safety.

There are no incidents of bullying in the home. Staff complete training around this area of practice and are aware of the signs and symptoms of bullying and intimidation. Young people are confident that staff will address any issues that they raise, relating to bullying or any other concerns. There have been no complaints since the last inspection.

Staff undertake safeguarding training that includes information relating to child sexual exploitation and radicalisation. This means that staff are aware of the signs that may indicate that young people are at an increased risk of harm from these issues of concern.

There is a safe area risk assessment in place, devised by the previous manager, which considers the suitability of the location of the home. However, senior staff and managers

have not revised and reviewed this risk assessment to reflect the specific needs or risks of young people living in the home. This is a missed opportunity to promote young people's safety.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The home is without a registered manager, and has been for 25 weeks. The previous manager resigned in February 2017. Interim management arrangements are in place. However, the provider is aware that the continued failure to have a registered manager limits the capacity for improvement and questions the ongoing operation of the home.

Senior care staff and registered managers from other homes provide staff with regular and practice-related formal supervision. This means that the responsible individual is able to monitor and assess staff practice and ensure that meeting young people's needs remains the focus of the daily routines in the home. Training is now up to date, with staff completing courses relating to physical restraint, first aid and fire safety. However, the majority of staff do not hold a suitable level 3 qualification relating to young people's care. Some staff lack experience, with few staff working in this profession prior to commencing their current role. This means that the staff caring for young people do not have the necessary skills, experience or qualifications to support them.

Senior care staff develop positive working relationships with placing authority social workers. One social worker said, 'I find the shift leaders to be really knowledgeable and understanding. They focus on the young people and the young people make progress because of this.' When other agencies fail to provide young people with the help and support that they need, allocated key workers endeavour to hold these agencies to account. To date, the success of this challenge, in the absence of a registered manager, is mixed. However, senior managers in the organisation are now responsible for escalating these requests.

A detailed young person's guide supports the more formal statement of purpose for the home. This means that placing authorities, young people and their families are fully aware of the aims and objectives of the service.

There are a number of monitoring systems in place to evaluate and assess the development of the service. However, in the absence of a registered manager, senior care staff and managers do not use these systems effectively to review the quality of care or promote positive outcomes for young people. Current systems do not include consultation with young people or other professionals, and they lack prescriptive actions to improve the service.

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: SC066912

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Oracle Care Limited

Registered provider address: Unit 54 Wrest Park, Silsoe, BEDFORD MK45 4HS

Responsible individual: Mark Cole

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Jo Stephenson, social care inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

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