

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	24 May 2016
Unique reference number	SC066912
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Oracle Care Limited
Registered provider address	Unit 54 Wrest Park, Silsoe, Bedford MK45 4HS

Responsible individual	Amanda Knowles
Registered manager	Lisa Hall
Inspector	Matt Hedges

Inspection date	24 May 2016
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
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.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement

SC066912

Summary of findings

The children's home provision requires improvement because:

- Some young people do not have access to the support and services that they need.
- The services outlined in the home's statement of purpose are not consistently available to all young people.
- Staff do not always assess risks effectively or take effective action to reduce these.
- The registered manager does not successfully challenge poor practice in other agencies.
- Some staff lack key skills, due to omissions in the training programme.
- Management oversight and monitoring systems do not always highlight or tackle key issues.
- Staff do not always keep young people's records up to date.

The children's home strengths

- Young people develop strong relationships with staff.
- Young people make good progress in some aspects of their life.
- Staff help young people to become more independent.
- Staff are very positive about the support that they receive from the registered manager.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that must be taken so that the registered persons 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 persons must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
5. Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met. In order to meet the engaging with the wider system standard, with particular reference to the arrangements for the provision of education and therapy, the registered person must ensure that staff: (b) seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs (c) 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.	1 July 2016
12 The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard, with particular reference to the assessment and management of risk, the registered provider must ensure that: (2)(a)(i) 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 (ii) staff help each child to understand how to keep safe (vi) staff take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare (b) the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from	1 July 2016

harm.	
13. The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard, with particular reference to skills and monitoring, the registered person must: (2)(c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child (f) 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.	1 July 2016
14. The care planning standard In order to meet the care planning standard, with particular reference to planning and admissions, the registered person must ensure: (2)(b)(i) that arrangements are in place to ensure the effective induction of each child into the home.	1 July 2016
The registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose (Regulation 16(5)).	1 July 2016
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which are kept up to date (Regulation 36(1)(b)).	1 July 2016
The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether children are effectively safeguarded; and the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being (Regulation 44 (4)(a)(b)).	1 July 2016
The registered person must ensure that the review of the quality of care provided for children ("the quality of care review") ascertains and considers the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff (Regulation 45(5)).	1 July 2016

Full report

Information about this children's home

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

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
7 October 15	Full	Good
29 June 2015	Full	Inadequate
2 March 2015	Interim	Declined effectiveness
30 October 2014	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Requires improvement
Young people struggle to engage in school and both of those living at the home are permanently excluded. These exclusions follow concerns about their behaviour and levels of attendance. For one young person, this has been an ongoing issue for a number of years, since before moving to the home. Planning and induction arrangements prior to their arrival did not adequately address this issue. Consequently, although staff took some action to seek alternative provision, this has been slow. The registered manager has failed to challenge education professionals or the placing authority effectively. This affects young peoples' progress, academic attainment and experiences on a day-to-day basis. One young person receives regular therapeutic support. The other does not receive the input and services that he needs. The home's statement of purpose outlines the therapeutic support available to young people. It also identifies the 'standardised psychological measures' that will be used to monitor progress. The registered manager fails to ensure that this support is consistently available to all young people or the staff that support them. This affects young people's progress. In addition, it limits the clinical oversight of the staff team's direct work with young people. Staff fail to help young people to understand how to keep themselves safe. Staff highlight key issues but do not always work effectively with young people to address them. For example, one young person's plan states that they require 'good advice, support, and guidance' regarding a range of subjects. These include relationships, sexual health and other issues. The registered manager was unable to find evidence of this work having taken place and has not ensured that young people's records were kept up-to-date. Despite these failings, young people develop good relationships with staff. This is a significant step for them. A member of staff from a youth offending team commented, 'The staff are committed and they have a great relationship with the young person.' A social care professional stated that one young person is 'more engaged with staff in this home than anywhere else.' Young people feel secure with staff because of this. Staff use their relationships to offer some individualised support to young people, which improves aspects of their behaviour. Staff also help young people to develop better practical independent living skills. One young person is particularly proud of his cooking ability. Staff consider young people's views well and advocate for them when required. Staff support young people who live some distance from their birth families to maintain these links safely. This helps young people to keep in touch with the	

people most important to them.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
Managers and staff do not always assess effectively whether young people are at risk of harm. They do not consistently take historical concerns and events into account, or assess how these may influence present behaviour. One social care professional highlighted some concerns in this area stating, 'There seems to be a lot of under reporting.' There have been a small number of significant incidents over the last three months. These include an incident when a young person's partner stayed overnight in the young person's bedroom. The registered manager shared this information with the relevant agencies in a timely way. However, she failed to take effective action to review building safety or staffing arrangements. Consequently, it is unclear whether this incident could happen again. Thus, the registered manager has failed to ensure that the day-to-day care arrangements effectively protect young people. The registered manager has developed good relationships with the local police. One officer stated, 'There is good contact and regular visits...staff are always helpful.' Staff always inform the police when a young person goes missing or is at potential risk of child sexual exploitation. Conversely, guidance for staff in respect of missing from home is not always clear. For example, it is unclear what time young people should be home in the evening. This prevents staff from taking effective or consistent action. In addition, staff fail to keep some other records such as immunisation records up to date. This further limits the quality of information and guidance available. Staff use their positive relationships with young people to ensure that aggressive, threatening or destructive behaviour in the home is well managed. Staff employ consistent, clear boundaries, which ensure that young people understand the expectations that staff have. This has helped to improve young people's behaviour and reduced incidents of this nature.	

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement
The home is managed by an experienced, suitably qualified, registered manager who has been in post since June 2015. The registered manager has made improvements to some aspects of the home's monitoring and review systems. She is aware of some of the home's strengths and weaknesses. This has resulted in improvements to the induction process for new staff, improved medication processes and recruitment and vetting practices, and a more stable staff team. As a result, the registered manager has tackled several previously identified regulatory shortfalls. However, the registered manager has not highlighted or taken action to remedy some other key issues affecting young people. These include a lack of services and support to some young people, or of the response of staff to some significant incidents. An independent person visits the home every month and writes a report. These visits have failed to provide the required oversight and challenge in recent months. Specifically, the independent person did not record a key safeguarding issue or assess the response of the staff team. Consequently, the independent person was not able to make an informed opinion as to whether the conduct of the home effectively safeguards young people and promotes their welfare. The registered manager completes a formal quality of care review every six months. This fails to ascertain or consider the opinions of young people, their parents, placing authorities or staff. This reduces the opportunities to seek feedback as to how the service may improve. These shortfalls hinder the registered manager to improve the service and they reduce her understanding of the impact that the home is having on young people's progress. The vast majority of staff are appropriately qualified and hold the required level three diploma. Two staff are currently working towards this and are both within the regulatory timescales. In contrast to this, a significant number of staff have not received training in key areas, most significantly in relation to sexually harmful/inappropriate behaviour. This lack of training affects staff ability to work effectively with some young people. All staff are wholly positive about the support they receive from the management team. Supervisions are regular and productive. This helps staff express any concerns they may have and reflect on aspects of their practice.	

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of children looked after is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place. However, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or that result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference that adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service 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'.

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