

SC066912

Registered provider: Oracle Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and operated by a private company. It is registered to provide care for up to three children aged between eight and 18 years. Children may have complex social or emotional difficulties and require attachment-aware, trauma-informed care and support.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 27 October 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 October 2021

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: 17 September 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/09/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
11/12/2018	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
16/07/2018	Full	Good
07/02/2018	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

Inspection judgements

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

At the time of the inspection, one child was living at the home. The child has lived at the home for approximately seven months. The inspector observed the child to be comfortable and relaxed in the home and staff to be warm and nurturing towards him.

There have been three managers at the home since the last inspection in September 2019. There has not been a registered manager since July 2021. The current manager has worked at the home for three months; however, they are yet to apply to register. In addition to this, since the child has started living at the home, there have been significant changes within the staff team. This has not provided the child with continuity of care or provided staff with strong, consistent leadership. The lack of established, secure relationships with carers compromises the child's emotional health and well-being.

Despite this shortfall, the child is making progress from his starting point. For example, he has recently begun to attend school full time. Clear bedtime routines and strong boundaries have ensured that the child's sleep pattern has improved. The child has a health passport which ensures staff support the child to attend routine and specialist health appointments. The child's social worker told the inspector that despite the inconsistency in staffing, the child has made 'amazing progress'.

Staff encourage and support the child to maintain significant relationships with people who are important to him. As a result, the child has good opportunities to spend quality time with his family.

Daily records do not support the child's understanding of his life story. They are written in jargonistic, formal language and do not capture the child's voice. The child does not have a memory book. Consequently, he is not able to explore his memories of his time living in the home.

Staff sensitively support the child to personalise his bedroom, and the home is a comfortable and relaxing place to live. However, the child's bathroom looks tired and worn in places. Some kitchen cupboards are secured with large padlocks, which gives the home an institutional feel. Hanging baskets containing dead plants are still in the garden. This detracts from what is otherwise a homely feel and has the potential to compromise the child's comfort and well-being.

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

Staff are guided to manage the child's complex behaviours by good-quality risk assessments and behaviour management plans that clearly tell staff what to do.

Plans include the triggers for complex behaviours and provide staff with strategies to manage these. As a result, although incidents do occur, they are generally well managed. However, on one occasion, staff did not update the child's risk assessment with key information. This potentially placed the child at increased risk of self-harm.

Managers have not ensured that, when restraint has occurred, records contain full and accurate information. For example, they do not identify that staff are not routinely offered a debrief within regulatory timescales after they have restrained the child. This represents a missed opportunity for managers to review staff practice in a timely way.

On one occasion, managers' monitoring did not identify that staff failed to record an incident of restraint. Following the restraint, a complaint was received about its appropriateness, despite the child's parent alleging the restraint was inappropriate. This lack of record and vigilance resulted in a significant delay in following safeguarding procedures and potentially placed children at risk.

Recruitment practice is not safe. This is because managers are not professionally curious about gaps in staff employment records. Omissions in safe recruitment of staff mean managers cannot be sure they only recruit suitable staff to care for the child. This is the third consecutive time that inspectors have identified shortfalls in staff recruitment.

More positively, staff talk with the child about keeping himself safe in day-to-day discussions and regular planned meetings. This includes talking about road safety, internet safety and stranger danger. This means that the child becomes increasingly aware of risks and learns to keep himself safe.

Managers ensure that the home's location risk assessment is regularly updated with information from the local police. As a result, staff are informed about known and emerging risks to the child that are within the vicinity of the home. Regular health and safety checks ensure that the home is a safe environment for the child to live in.

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

The manager recognises the shortfalls and is keen to improve the quality of care. Since her appointment, the manager has focused her time on providing day-to-day support for the child. This includes developing incentives and rewards with the child to promote positive behaviour and the child's self-care skills. This means that the child is acquiring important skills, as well as gaining a sense of achievement which will improve his self-esteem.

Several staff have left in recent months and the home currently has three staff vacancies. To ensure the child receives consistent care, the manager and the home's core staff have worked additional shifts. However, despite their best efforts to achieve consistency, staff from other homes in the organisation have been used to

ensure that shifts are covered. This means that, at times, the child has not known the members of staff looking after him. Insufficient staff has, on occasion, compromised the young person's quality of care.

Staff told the inspector that they feel supported by the manager and that this helps them to develop their practice. However, this is not reinforced through regular supervision, including more regular supervision for new staff. This creates a missed opportunity to formalise and review staff development.

There are significant gaps in staff completing mandatory training. This includes training in the administration of medication, behaviour management, safeguarding, 'Prevent' duty and face-to-face first aid. This does not demonstrate effective leadership or assure the regulator that managers and staff have the skills and knowledge to meet the needs of the child.

Staff work with the therapist to understand the complex needs of the child and are learning how best to support him. The manager recognises the positive impact this knowledge can have on the child's experiences. Further work is planned to improve staff's knowledge of working with children's individual needs.

The manager is proactive in ensuring that the child's ethnicity and cultural heritage is reflected in his day-to-day care. For instance, staff cook the child his favourite food, they supported his national football team with him in the recent UEFA EURO 2020 competition and they enable him to watch programmes on Netflix in his first language. This gives the child a sense of pride in his heritage and supports his cultural identity.

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. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)) This relates to staff not updating a child's risk assessment with emerging risks related to self-harm.	12 December 2021
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and 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; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.	12 December 2021

(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(d)(e)(h)) This relates to staff not completing all mandatory training. It also relates to there being insufficient staff to provide continuity of care to the child. It also relates to shortfalls in the manager's monitoring.	
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— the individual is of integrity and good character. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(a)) This relates to managers not identifying a gap in one staff's employment history and being professionally curious about this.	12 December 2021
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(a)(b)(c)) This relates to staff not receiving regular supervision and to new staff not receiving more regular twice-monthly supervision.	12 December 2021

The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the name of the child; details of the child’s behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the name of the person who used the measure (“the user”), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure; within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so (“the authorised person”)— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)) This relates to managers not debriefing staff within regulatory timescales following incidents of restraint.	12 December 2021
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the home is a nurturing and supportive environment that meets the needs of their children. Outside areas should be well maintained and attractive places for children to spend time in. Cupboards which need to be locked for children's safety should not be secured by large padlocks, and all rooms should be well maintained. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that the home's records on each child represent a significant contribution to their life history. Children and their parents should be supported to understand the nature of records kept by the home and how to access them. Staff should understand their important role in encouraging the child to reflect on and understand their history, according to their age and understanding. Staff should keep and encourage children to keep appropriate memorabilia of the time spent living at the home and help them record significant life events. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.5)

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: SC066912

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Oracle Care Limited

Registered provider address: Suites 1 & 5, Riverside Business Centre, Foundry Lane, Milford, Belper, Derbyshire DE56 0RN

Responsible individual: Jodie Whitehouse

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Karen Gillingwater, Social Care Inspector

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