Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	**29/06/2015**
Unique reference number	**SC066912**
Type of inspection	**Full**
Provision subtype	**Children's home**
Registered person	**Oracle Care Limited**
Registered person address	**Unit 54 Wrest Park, Silsoe, BEDFORD, MK45 4HS**

Responsible individual	**Steven Bromley**
Registered manager	**Brett Pointon**
Inspector	**Matthew Hedges**

Inspection date	**29/06/2015**
Previous inspection judgement	**Declined effectiveness**
Enforcement action since last inspection	**None**
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	**Inadequate**
There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	**Inadequate**
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	**Inadequate**

SC066912

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is inadequate because:

- Child protection policies, particularly in relation to bullying, and allegations against staff, are not implemented effectively. This places young people at risk.
- Care plans and risk assessments are not kept up to date. Key information is omitted.
- Communication with the local authority and placing authorities is poor.
- The home is understaffed. A number of temporary workers have been covering; as a result, support to young people has been inconsistent.
- Staff supervision is inadequate.
- Staff are not vetted appropriately.
- Managerial oversight is poor. As a result, significant shortfalls have not been addressed.
- Physical restraints are badly recorded. Young people do not get the support they need after a restraint. This does not protect or promote their welfare.
- Medication records are deficient. This has the potential to put young people's health at risk.
- The home's Statement of Purpose does not provide sufficient detail.
- Case files are not stored safely.
- The handling and recording of complaints is insufficient.

The children's home strengths

- Some young people make progress at school and engage with mental health professionals effectively.
- A new manager is in post. She has started to address some of the shortfalls.

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets 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**
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 child's placing authority the registered person must ensure that staff:- (a) seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans.	21/08/15
6: The quality and purpose of care standard In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard with particular reference to children's welfare the registered provider must ensure that staff:- (2)(b)(ii) protect and promote each child's welfare.	21/08/15
10: The health and well-being standard In order to meet the health and well-being standard with particular reference to children's support the registered person must ensure:- (1)(b) children receive support in relation to their health and well-being.	21/08/15
11: The positive relationships standard In order to meet the positive relationships standard with particular reference to supervision the registered person must ensure that staff:- (2)(x) are provided with supervision and support to enable them	21/08/15

to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same.	
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard with particular reference to assessing harm and child protection policies the registered person must ensure:- (2) (a) that staff - (i) 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 (vii) are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies.	21/08/15
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard with particular reference to staffing and monitoring and review systems the registered person must: (2) (e) ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child (h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.	21/08/15
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. (Regulation 16 (1))	21/08/15
The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. (Regulation 23 (1))	21/08/15
The registered person must ensure that a person only manages a children's home if full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the person in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 28 (1) (c))	21/08/15
The registered person must ensure that the employment of any	21/08/15

person on a temporary basis at the children's home does not prevent children from receiving such continuity of care as is reasonable to meet their needs. (Regulation 31 (1))	
The registered person may only employ an individual to work at the children's home if full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (3)(d))	21/08/15
The registered person must ensure that all employees receive practice-related supervision. (Regulation 33 (4)(b))	21/08/15
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy which is intended to safeguard children accommodated in the children's home from abuse or neglect; and sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect. (Regulation 34 (1))	21/08/15
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy for the prevention of bullying in the home, which must in particular set out the procedure for dealing with an allegation of bullying. (Regulation 34 (3))	21/08/15
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 a description of the measure and its duration. (Regulation 35 (3) (a) (iv))	21/08/15
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 details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure. (Regulation 35 (3) (a) (v))	21/08/15
The registered person must ensure that 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. (Regulation 35 (b))	21/08/15
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which are kept up to date. (Regulation 36 (1) (b))	21/08/15
The registered person must ensure that case records are kept securely in the children's home during the period when the child to whom the case records relate is accommodated there. (Regulation 36 (2) (c))	21/08/15

The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. (Regulation 39 (3))	21/08/15
The registered person must notify, without delay, the local authority for the area in which the children's home is located of every discharge of a child from the home. (Regulation 41 (1))	21/08/15
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months. (Regulation 45 (1))	21/08/15
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. (Regulation 46 (1))	21/08/15

Full report

Information about this children's home

- The home may only provide care and accommodation for up to 2 children.
- The home may provide care and accommodation for children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.
- The home is owned and operated by a private provider.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
02/03/2015	CH - Interim	Declined in effectiveness
30/10/2014	CH - Full	Good
31/03/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	**inadequate**

Young people and staff have experienced a very unsettled period at the home. As a result, there are significant staff shortages. Agency staff and staff from other homes have been used to cover these shortfalls. This does not provide continuity of care for young people. Young people express concern regarding the, 'loss' of their staff. A social worker also notes, 'there was a lot of staff and a lot of inconsistent workers… (due to this) I felt strategies were not always implemented effectively'. This significantly reduces staff's ability to support young people to manage their behaviour safely. It also affects the quality of the relationships between staff and young people and limits their progress and experiences. A young person highlights one specific example of this, explaining that a member of staff from another home did not let them have a drink alone with their friend, despite other staff agreeing.

Some young people display increasingly violent behaviour, including a significant number of assaults on staff. This behaviour led to an increase in police intervention, and subsequent arrests. For one young person this resulted in having to move from the home, significantly limiting the options available to them. Another young person reflects that this period was, 'difficult'.

Inconsistent staffing has also resulted in the loss of key information. For example, a young person shared some personal information in relation to their background. This was not effectively documented or communicated to new staff. As a result, it is impossible for staff to ensure that the young person receives the support they need in relation to their well-being.

Several complaints including ones from young people have been made. Records of complaints are poor. Several do not detail the action taken in response or the outcome of any investigation. On one occasion, a young person's complaint was not formally acknowledged. As a result, the only record is a hand written note that has been archived in a file. This does not protect young people or ensure that their complaints are heard.

Arrangements for managing medication are not safe. Some medication is not accurately recorded when it is administered. Other medication, or directions for its use, is not mentioned in young people's plans. This causes uncertainty for staff and has the potential to place young people's physical health at risk.

Despite these shortfalls, some young people make progress in their education and

attend school regularly. This supports academic development. Young people also engage well with mental health professionals. This helps young people to make some progress emotionally.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	**inadequate**

Young people are not protected. Managers do not implement the home's safeguarding policy effectively and consequently, staff do not act in accordance with this. This specifically relates to allegations against staff which have not been referred to the designated officer in the local authority. This failure to share information compromises young people's protection from harm. In addition, the home's bullying policy is not implemented satisfactorily. Despite young people raising a number of concerns regarding the behaviour of their peers, the home does not use their bullying log effectively to collate and explore these concerns. As a result, managers are unsure whether bullying has been an issue at the home.

There have been a high number of physical restraints. The last being recorded on 11 April 2015. On one occasion, a young person complained of breathing difficulties during a restraint. This was not responded to appropriately. This does not promote or protect young people's welfare and places them at significant risk of harm. Records of physical restraints are highly deficient. Some restraints are not recorded within 24 hours. Other records do not show the duration of the restraint or the methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the restraint. Furthermore, young people are not always spoken to about the use of the restraint. Finally, records are not always viewed or signed by a manager or other authorised person to confirm they are accurate. These shortfalls significantly reduce the support offered to young people. This includes places them at risk of being held inappropriately, and without management scrutiny.

Staff recruitment processes are not robust. For example, agency staff checks do not include verification of the reasons for leaving previous employment with children or vulnerable adults, or verification of written references. In addition, permanent staff, including the home's manager do not have full employment histories with satisfactory written explanations for gaps in employment. This places young people at risk of being exposed to unsafe adults.

Risks are not always known or understood. Young people's records, including risk assessments and care plans are not kept up to date. This is compounded by staff shortfalls and impacts on the continuity of care young people receive. In addition, it does not allow staff to effectively assess whether young people are at risk of harm or make arrangements to reduce the risk accordingly. For example,

assessments that are used to judge the impact of potential new young people to the home are not based on up to date information. Key information is not known and is omitted. This renders the assessment inadequate and puts staff and young people at risk.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	**inadequate**

The Registered Manager has recently left the home. A new manager is in place, she is currently in the process of registering with Ofsted. She is appropriately experienced and qualified for the role and has been in post for approximately six weeks.

Managerial oversight is poor. Monitoring and review systems are inadequate. There have been no formal reviews of the quality of care. Other processes do not effectively identify weaknesses and do not support continuous improvement. This limits the understanding that managers have in relation to young people's progress and the difference the home is making. In addition, the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the home is not effectively reviewed at least once in each calendar year. Senior managers undertake an assessment but this is not utilised appropriately. As a result, risks are not adequately assessed and key information, such as the name of the single point of contact police officer is not readily available.

Young people's placing authorities are not always involved effectively in young people's care due to poor information sharing. Social workers raise concerns regarding this, one citing an, 'inconsistent quality of reports'. Another social worker explains that weekly reports are not always received. This weakens the relationship between staff and the young people's placing authorities. Significantly, this also fails to ensure that social workers are kept up to date with key information or are provided with an overview of events that occur. One social worker explains that they sometimes receive information from young people and then have to, 'chase' reports from staff.

Records do not evidence that the local authority is notified when young people move out of the home. This limits the oversight of the hosting authority being kept up to date with the young people living in the area.

Staff do not receive adequate support. Supervision is irregular and of poor quality. It does not support staff to understand or manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of young people. This is particularly significant when staff have been involved in serious incidents. Furthermore, it does

not adequately explore other practice-related issues. This limits the ability of managers to assess the support staff require and improve areas of practice. This impacts on the resilience of staff and the quality of care provided to young people.

The home's Statement of Purpose does not provide sufficient information, specifically in relation to the therapy support offered by the home and the supervision arrangements for staff. This means accurate information is not available to young people, families and placing authorities.

Records, including young people's case files, are not stored securely in the home. This means that personal, often highly confidential information is inappropriately accessible to young people.

The new manager has identified, and started to address, some of these shortfalls. This is supported by senior managers who have also made changes to the organisational structure as a result of their own concerns. However the changes made are not yet embedded.

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 looked after children 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 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 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 who 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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