

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC066912
Inspector	Marian Denny
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Oracle Care Limited
Registered person address	Unit 1 Dane Valley Mill Havannah Street CONGLETON Cheshire CW12 2AH
Responsible individual	Steven Bromley
Registered manager	Brett David Pointon
Date of last inspection	31/03/2014

Inspection date	30/10/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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This children's home provides young people with opportunities to achieve positive outcomes. Young people live in a supportive home environment, which provides them with consistency, structure and routine, so enabling them to make good progress. This has included improvements in their educational attendance and attainments. There has also been some reduction in young people taking part in risky behaviour. On the whole young people enjoy good relationships with staff and feel safe. Social workers, youth offending workers and independent reviewing officers are all also happy with the quality of care and support staff provide to the young people.

Staff are knowledgeable, skilled and very supportive to the young people in their care. They have a clear understanding of young people's needs and how best to support them. Staff have important insight into the reasons for young people's more challenging behaviour and use this knowledge to help them manage their feelings and frustrations more constructively. The manager and staff have established strong working relationships with young people, social workers, schools and other agencies to make improvements in young people's lives. They have also established communication with young people's families. This means young people are supported more consistently by the significant adults in their lives. This also helps young people to feel settled and emotionally secure.

The manager provides strong, effective leadership and management. He fully understands the strengths of the service and effectively uses quality assurance systems to develop the service further and secure improvements. He is assertive with partner agencies and ensures that young people are provided with the support and services they need.

Two areas for improvement were identified at this inspection. One related to the standard of decoration and maintenance of the home. The second was in relation to the adequacy of record keeping; specifically the completion of an inventory of personal possessions when a young person is admitted to the home. However, this shortfall did not negatively impact on young people's welfare.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This privately owned home provides accommodation for up to two young people. The home provides care for young people who may display emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
31/03/2014	Interim	good progress
24/10/2013	Full	good
31/01/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
02/10/2012	Full	outstanding

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

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment, specifically that it is well-decorated and maintained including the immediate outdoor space (NMS 10.3)
- ensure there is a robust system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping and take action when needed. This specifically relates to the record relating to the inventory of personal possessions when a young person is admitted to the home. (NMS 22.1)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Overall young people are making good progress although some young people are currently struggling in some aspects of their lives. Nevertheless, all the young people are making good progress with their education and learning. Their engagement in education has significantly improved since they moved into the home. Young people's attendance at school is excellent, including some young people who previously have had very poor educational attendance. They are making real efforts in their school work and are making the most of their opportunities to improve their educational achievements. Young people are also developing self-care and independence skills taking into account their age and ability. For example, young people are taking suitable responsibility to keep their rooms tidy, preparing meals and cooking.

Most young people are achieving positive health outcomes. Their physical and emotional health is good. Young people understand the benefits of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and taking responsibility for their own health. As a result they are developing healthy diets, making improvements in their personal care and taking part in physical exercise, including activities such as cycling, go-karting and playing on the trampoline. Although young people understand concerns adults may have about their health, some young people struggle to make good decisions about their health. For example, some young people have occasionally refused to attend health services such as accessing the child and adolescent mental health services.

Young people previously involved in criminal and harmful behaviour are dealing with these problems. They show a strong commitment to engage with the youth offending service, are attending their appointments and are beginning to accept responsibility for their behaviour and address their offences. A social worker said, 'His attendance with the youth offending service (YOS) is very good and both the YOS worker and manager are working extremely well together.' Young people sometimes behave inappropriately and there have been a number of instances when young people have not been able to manage their anger and have caused damage in the home.

Young people are developing positive attachments with important adults in their lives, including staff. Young people are positive about staff most of the time and feel that staff are interested in their lives and concerned about their welfare. One professional said, 'Staff try their best to help (name of young person) and he is really beginning to listen to staff.' When young people are upset and experiencing problems they are able to accept staff's guidance and support.

Young people enjoy seeing their family and this is helping them to maintain their relationships with the important people in their lives. Staff ensure that such contact is

a safe, positive and enjoyable experience.

Quality of care

good

Young people benefit from the routine, structure and consistency that staff provide. A social worker said, 'This is the best placement (name of young person) has had since being in care. Staff are totally committed to him and want the very best possible outcomes for him in his life. He is now regularly attending school, his YOS appointments and attending sessions with the therapist.' Staff show a good level of knowledge, skill and understanding in meeting young people's complex needs and meet these on a daily basis. Staff have aspirations for all young people and work strenuously to promote young people's personal growth, as well as their social and emotional development. The young people are actively encouraged by staff to make good choices and to enjoy a full range of social opportunities and experiences. For example, they watch television, digital versatile discs (DVDs), play on a trampoline, games consoles, snooker, cycle, go on walks, go-karting and travel to the local pond to feed the ducks.

Staff are confident and skilled in dealing with challenging and risky behaviour. Overall, this has led to some improvements in young people's behaviour. However, some young people continue to struggle to manage their feelings and on these occasions show difficult behaviour. The manager and staff understand the underlying causes of this behaviour and develop strategies to support the young people to try to deal with their feelings and frustrations in a constructive manner. Staff use good communication and interpersonal skills to engage with young people to carefully listen to their worries. This enables staff to find out what is wrong and to ask young people what they can to help sort things out. One professional said, 'I really cannot fault the manager and the staff they are really doing their utmost to help (name of young person) and are really caring and managing his behaviour well.'

Staff are working hard to ensure there is effective partnership working with all the professionals involved with the young people. They are also working hard to develop effective relationships with young people's families in order to support positive changes in young people's behaviour. This helps young people to feel emotionally secure because they know that all the adults in their lives get on, share information and are working together in their best interests.

Care planning arrangements and the practice of staff recognise young people as individuals with different needs, backgrounds, interests and views. They ensure that young people receive an individual service designed to meet their personal needs, cultural background and identity. Staff regularly discuss care plans with the young people to ensure young people are clear about what should be happening and that

the plans consistently meet the individual needs of the young person. Young people actively take part in decisions about their lives. Staff listen to their views and take them seriously.

Young people have good access to a range of health professionals to meet their emotional and physical needs. Staff have a very good understanding of young people's specific health needs and ensure young people's needs are met on a daily basis. Staff are persistent at supporting and encouraging young people to attend health appointments and as a result, young people usually attend them. However, some young people are currently not agreeing to engage with the child and mental health services.

The manager and staff work effectively with schools to make sure young people have suitable learning opportunities and deal with any barriers to young people's full participation in education. The staff use good routines and strategies to actively encourage and support young people's school attendance and potential attainments. As a result, taking into account their initial starting points, young people are making educational progress.

Young people live in a suitably designed family house in a residential neighbourhood. It is handy for the shops, parks, public transport and community amenities. The house is clean. However, some recent damage has been caused to various areas of the property by the young people. This means that the overall standard of the house that young people are living in is not well-decorated or suitably maintained. The manager is fully aware of these issues and is making arrangements for these to be addressed in order to improve the overall standard of the home.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Young people are kept safe in the home. Comprehensive risk assessments inform and guide staff in keeping them as safe as possible and reducing risk-taking behaviours. These plans are monitored and reviewed by the whole staff group as needed, for example, after any serious incidents. Particular vulnerabilities of the young people are recognised well by staff. Young people are advised by staff of the potential consequences of the risks they take to help young people make positive choices.. In order to protect young people, extra staff have been used to provide higher levels of supervision and this appears to be effective in promoting young people's welfare and effectively safeguarding them. There have been no incidents where young people have gone missing. Staff effectively balance young people's need for independence with any safeguarding concerns. All significant events are routinely communicated to the relevant people and agencies in a timely manner.

Young people benefit from positive behaviour management strategies used by the staff. They generally enjoy good relationships with staff and as a result, a number of difficult situations are diffused. Physical intervention is used, but only as a last resort

and always for safety reasons. Staff receive good quality training in a range of safeguarding issues, including e-safety. Safe care practices are embedded in day-to-day life in the home.

Staff promote young people's on-going safety by undertaking regular fire drills and service tests making sure that all faults are efficiently addressed. Consequently, the environment is physically safe and secure. Staff ensure that there is rigorous monitoring of all systems within the home. This includes the appropriate storage and administration of medication.

The recruitment and selection of people working at the home is very thorough to make sure that only people with suitable skills, experience and competencies work at the home. Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that visitors to the home are suitably checked and supervised.

Leadership and management

good

The manager has been in charge of the home since August 2014 and was registered with Ofsted in October 2014. He is suitably experienced and qualified to carry out his responsibilities. He has over 6 years' experience in residential child care and over 3 years' managerial experience. He has achieved NVQ level 4 in Health and Social Care for Children and has commenced the level 5 Diploma in the Management of Children's Homes. The manager demonstrates a real commitment to his continued professional development and intends to further improve his knowledge and skills through training.

The manager provides strong leadership and effective management. He effectively uses monitoring systems to fully understand the strengths of the service, areas for development, and to secure improvements. The staff team are well supported and equipped by the manager to support young people effectively. As a result young people are making good progress. The manager is not complacent and is keen to develop the expertise of the staff, as well as improve the quality of care and outcomes for young people.

The numbers of staff on duty are sufficient to meet the needs of young people. The deployment of staff promotes continuity of care and provides opportunities for young people to form positive attachments with staff. Staff feel very well supported by the manager through regular professional supervision and team meetings. This provides staff with the chance to review and reflect on young people's progress and needs, their own performance and development needs, the running of the home and how best to develop and improve the standard of care and support provided to young people. Staff have suitable opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge through relevant training. The manager supports their continued professional development through a range of activities including taking on additional responsibilities and gaining relevant child care qualifications.

The home is efficiently organised and run in line with the aims and objectives of its Statement of Purpose and children's guide. These provide an accurate and comprehensive picture of the children's home and the services it provides. A clear development plan is in place and its progress is monitored by the Registered Manager and the Responsible Individual. Comprehensive reports are compiled following visits under Regulation 33 which also informs the development plan.

Written records about the young people provide a clear picture of their progress and experiences. The records provide a narrative of young people's daily lives, observations about their mood and behaviour, and an analysis of their progress in achieving positive outcomes. Staff keep detailed accounts of their direct work with young people and provide a clear picture of young people's views and feelings about their lives, the progress they make and areas for further work. All records in the home are signed by managers and are up to date. However, quality assurance systems are not sufficiently robust. For example, one record relating to the completion of an inventory of personal possessions when a young person was admitted to the home had not been completed. This shortfall though did not negatively impact on the outcomes for young people or their welfare.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The 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 relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.