

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	17/02/2016
Unique reference number	SC066917
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	Michael Lloyd
Inspector	Christy Wannop

Inspection date	17/02/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Inadequate
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	Require improvement
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Require improvement

SC066917

Summary of findings

The children's home provision requires improvement because:

- Educational attendance and progress are still not good enough. Staff do not have documented strategies to ensure school attendance.
- There is insufficient independence in the arrangements for external monthly monitoring of the home. The independent visitor has a close personal relationship with the home's senior manager.
- Young people do not have independent access to a telephone without asking staff for permission.
- Staff work alone with a single young person, but agreement between them on safe standards of behaviour is neither documented nor explicit. Young people may not know what they can expect or what is allowed.
- The registered provider does not report, or evaluate, safeguarding or significant incidents within the formal report of review of the quality of care.
- The manager does not see, or have a copy of, his supervision records. He is unable to reflect on the record of his regular professional discussions with his line manager.

The children's home's strengths

- Effective managerial input by the new registered manager is driving a much improved service since the last full inspection, when the home was judged inadequate.
- The consistent, small staff team contributes greatly to a feeling of well-being and security in the young person. The benefits are real friendships and an active 'ordinary' life in his local community.
- Accessible advice from a team of in-house therapists has helped staff to develop a more therapeutic parenting approach.
- The sense of belonging, and the views and experience of the young person are central to improvements in the service. Staff have really connected with him.

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.

Requirements	Due date
8. The education standard In order to meet the education standard, with particular reference to documented strategies to reinforce good school attendance, the registered provider must ensure that staff: (2) (a) (x) help each child to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child's relevant plans.	31/03/2016
The registered provider may not appoint the following as an independent person: a person who has, or has had, a connection with the registered person; a person working at the home; which the registered provider considers to give rise to doubts about that person's impartiality (for the purposes of producing the independent person's report – see Regulation 44) (Regulation 43 (g) (i) (ii)).	31/03/2016
The registered person must ensure that children are provided at all reasonable times with access to the following facilities which they may use without reference to persons working in the home: a telephone on which to make and receive telephone calls in private (Regulation 22(a)).	31/03/2016

Recommendations

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

- Ensure the registered provider actively seeks independent scrutiny of the home, and makes best use of information from independent and internal monitoring (including under Regulations 44 and 45) to ensure continuous improvement. They should be skilled in anticipating difficulties and reviewing incidents, such as learning from disruptions and placement breakdowns. They are responsible for proactively implementing lessons learned and sustaining good practice ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24).
- Ensure a record of supervision is kept for staff, including the manager. The record should provide evidence that supervision is delivered in line with Regulation 33(4)(b). It is good practice for a note of the content and/or outcomes of supervision sessions to be kept and to ensure that both the person giving the supervision and the staff member have a copy of the record ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraphs 13.3 & 13.4).
- Ensure staff support children to be aware of and manage their own safety, both inside and outside the home, to the extent that any good parent would. Staff should help children to understand how to protect themselves, feel protected and be protected from significant harm. This relates to an explicit expectation of adults' safe and professional behaviour when working alone in the house that is shared with young people ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.9).

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home provides care and accommodation for up to two children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is privately owned and operated by a limited company.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
31/12/2015	Monitoring	N/A
03/11/2015	Full	Inadequate
24/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
16/12/2014	Full	Outstanding
19/03/2014	Interim	Good progress

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	Require improvement
One young person lives at this home. There are many aspects of his life that have improved, but his experience of education requires further improvement. School attendance and achievement is not a success for the young person. This is becoming an increasing issue at a crucial point in his school life just before GCSEs start. Improvements that were in their early stages at November's inspection have not been sustained. In the period since the last full inspection, his attendance at the organisation's local school has declined from a peak of 87% to 79%. Care plans are not clear on what staff should do to ensure good routines for late nights and early mornings, to encourage school attendance rather than school refusal. There is no documented plan or direction to staff about their response and strategies if a young person refuses to get up to go to school. This has led to a situation where he stays in bed until the afternoon. There has, however, been other good work to push for a new assessment of educational needs and close liaison and support when the young person is in school. There is clear progress for the young person in emotional stability and security, with a reduction in challenges and concerns about his experience of social relationships. Care is tailored specifically to needs, though not always documented in all aspects. Improved behaviour management plans are underway. Staff have a good sense of the significant relationships in his life and work hard to help him come to terms with events from the past that impact on his day-to-day progress. They promote positive contact with family and previous carers, as decided by the placing authority. Relationships between staff and the young person are excellent. He feels positive about the home and 'his staff'. He trusts them, talks to them about the important things and hears their advice in some great conversations, carefully recorded by staff. Health management is better coordinated through these closer relationships. Staff act as good parents, and encourage good hygiene and care of clothes and belongings. They step in when needed so the young person leads a healthy lifestyle. This promotes good self-image and self-esteem. They talk to the young person regularly about health and emotional well-being, and make referrals for child and adolescent mental health, and medical support, in line with the young person's perspective. The service's own team of therapists advises the staff team,	

and the offer of direct therapeutic intervention is always 'on the table'.

Staff balance promoting independence and ensuring they deliver nurturing care. They have really progressed the opportunities for the young person's social development. They are helping him to have an experience that is much more like that of his new friends in the community, with free time and good leisure pursuits of football and sport. They are talking to the placing authority about allowing 'normal' safe access to social media and a mobile phone.

The views of the young person are fundamental to changes and improvements in the service. He has a feeling of investment and ownership of 'his home'. The house décor and furnishings reflect his taste and, increasingly, he takes care of it. He says 'I like to live by myself'. He would like a foreign holiday, more modern furnishings and a new kitchen. A placing authority says that it sees benefits and their young person is 'now investing in placement – going to clubs etc. really nice to see'.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
Lone working by staff with only one resident increases the young person's vulnerability, and also that of staff. The current lone working policy does not address safer caring principles. It does not make clear the expectations of staff behaviour in the house and is not shared with young people so they know what to expect. Young people do not have access to a telephone on which they can make calls in private without recourse to staff, for example if they feel unsafe. The registered provider's analysis of significant incidents, including after restraint, allegations and safeguarding investigations, does not maximise opportunities to review safeguarding practice against the home's procedures and identify improvements. The same is true of the formal review of the quality of care, which fails to mention of the most significant incident and allegation since the last full inspection. The local safeguarding designated officer has no concerns about how the registered person implemented safeguarding procedures after a recent allegation and subsequent investigation that did not meet the threshold for local authority intervention. Staff are trained in safeguarding and report to the police if events happen out of hours. Risk management and assessments are improved. Close, lone staffing means that staff are fully responsible and focused on any risks to the young person. Fire safety	

is strengthened. The young person now responds to the regular fire drills. Risks in the environment are much reduced and potentially unsafe outbuildings are soon to be demolished, removing that risk altogether. Staff are now all safely recruited.

Behaviour management is good. All staff, including the manager, are now trained in the home's system of physical intervention. The level of use of restraint low, and staff offer to debrief young people afterwards with a therapist. A consistent staff team is reaping rewards through role modelling, guidance and effective boundaries. Consequently, the young person's self-control is much better. Damage in the home and violence towards others is reduced. Staff use techniques to encourage the young person to manage his feelings. They say the young person has asked them: 'Why aren't you angry with me, why are you calm all the time?'

A strong sense of belonging at the home means that there have been no concerns about young people going missing. Staff have involved the young person in thinking about safer alternatives to running off when angry or upset. He has identified that he might go for a walk by himself 'to get out of the situation'. Negotiated free time with friends and reliable contact with family mean the young person sees no need to go missing, and there is no risk of sexual exploitation. These improvements contribute to a feeling of well-being and security in the young person, in an increasingly safe environment.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Require improvement
Management steer and monitoring are improving under the experienced, skilled and qualified manager. He was appointed in July 2015, applied to Ofsted in October 2015 and was registered on 8 February 2016. The home is on an improving trajectory, but some further improvement is required. The previous full inspection raised 11 regulatory shortfalls. These were about: behavioural support and physical intervention; risk management; use of safeguarding reporting procedures; management monitoring; and the information provided by the home in its statement of purpose. The registered person has taken action to meet nine of these areas and, consequently, the quality of the care is much better. Some of the issues predated the current manager, yet his plan for action was already underway. Ofsted's monitoring visit at the end of December found improvement. Educational attendance is, however, a continuing concern for the placing authority and the staff. The admissions policy, as defined within the improved statement of	

purpose and the focus of a previous requirement, is untested. However, since the last inspection, the registered person has protected the young person in placement and has not made any new admissions.

External scrutiny of the home lacks independence. The monthly 'Regulation 44' visitor has a personal relationship with the registered manager. The organisation is aware of the conflict of interest and is taking action to address the shortfall. The review of the quality of care includes consultation and is realistic about the strengths and development of the service, but specific reviews of incidents are not always drawn into the registered person's review of the quality of care.

The manager does not hold copies of his own supervision notes and so does not have a record upon which to reflect on his practice. Lone working and new staff members mean that some staff who have not yet completed their induction are left in charge. However, the manager judges their competence before they work alone.

The small, stable staff team is currently all male, but women are now being introduced to the team to strengthen the female presence in the house. No agency staff are used. The manager has been keen to secure experienced and qualified staff as part of his plan for improvement. The organisation is rolling out therapeutic parenting training across the company and some staff here have undertaken this.

Staff are appreciative of their good support and training. They are learning from the experience of the manager, and he is developing individual staff strengths and the opportunity to develop management skills. They are thoughtful in their analysis of young people's needs and good insight into the young person's experience. A therapist said that this staff group 'walked the walk with X'.

The service is delivering a clearer, nurturing, positive parenting approach. The improvements made at the home mean that the service is much closer to its aims and objectives of providing 'attachment aware, trauma informed care, education and clinical support in a therapeutic environment'. Computerised recording systems are more effective, and new systems for tracking children's outcomes and progress are about to start. Changes within the clinical provision are underway.

Partnership working is constructive and the manager advocates for the young person. This includes challenging, where necessary. An example is challenging a new educational assessment to ensure the young person is not disadvantaged. The placing authority sees an improving picture under this manager. It is a 'more structured, a consistent team'. It says the staff provide 'huge stick-ability'.

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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