

SC066917

Registered provider: Oracle Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home provides care and accommodation for up to two children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. A private provider owns and operates the home.

Inspection dates: 26 to 27 October 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

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: 23 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: declined in effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home requires improvement to be good because:

- The registered manager does not ensure that all staff have a sufficient knowledge and understanding of their responsibilities relating to the appropriate referral of safeguarding concerns.
- Staff do not consistently or effectively challenge young people's unacceptable behaviours. They do not always encourage young people to take responsibility for their inappropriate actions.
- Staff do not receive regular supervision to ensure that their practice meets young people's individual needs.
- Managers do not consistently deploy safer recruitment practice to ensure that staff are suitably checked and vetted.

The children's home's strengths:

- Partnership working between the service, young people's families, the placing authorities and other agencies has improved greatly since the last inspection. This better supports young people's progress and development.
- Staff now help young people to better understand the importance of education. This means that young people make good progress in this area of their development.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/02/2017	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
03/11/2016	Full	Requires improvement
17/02/2016	Full	Requires improvement
03/11/2015	Full	Inadequate

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 positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on an understanding about acceptable behaviour and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff— encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding. (Regulation 11(1)(b)(c)(2)(a)(iii))	29/12/2017
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 are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(vii))	29/12/2017
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 if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32(1)(2)(a)(3)(d))	29/12/2017
The registered person must ensure that all employees receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33(4)(b))	29/12/2017

Inspection judgements

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

Young people living in the home at the time of the last inspection, in February 2017, have now left the service. This service did not accommodate young people from early July 2017 until late September 2017, and prior to this, young people were absent from the home without permission for a prolonged period.

The day-to-day and overall experience of young people currently living in the home is positive, although the duration of their placements to date is short. As a result, young people's relationships with staff are still in their infancy. Furthermore, although early indications are that young people are making some progress, this has yet to be sustained over time. However, young people say that they like living in the home and that they enjoy spending time with staff. One young person said, 'I didn't think I'd like it here but I do, and the staff are helping me.'

Historically, staff did not make sure that young people's case files were kept up to date, or that they included all necessary documents. This shortfall was detrimental to young people's progress. This is a lesson learned for managers and staff and, as a result, case files for current young people contain all required information. This enables staff to provide young people with personalised and integrated care and support that reflects their individual needs.

Young people attend the organisation's school, and they are making the most of this learning opportunity. Although those young people who left the home in recent months did not fully engage in education while living at the home, the current young people have good attendance. This is because staff now prioritise and better promote education. They work with allocated teaching staff to assess young people's learning styles and needs. As a result, young people start to recognise the positive impact that education has on their development.

Staff now work in partnership with a range of primary and specialist health services, including in-house psychological and therapeutic professionals. This means that should young people need access to these services, they do not experience unnecessary delays. However, in respect of those young people who have now left the home, their engagement with health services was poor. Staff failed to work with these young people or specialist services to address this reluctance. Consequently, these young people made limited progress in this area of their development.

At the time of the last inspection, staff did not seek young people's views or wishes, or include them in decisions about the development of the home. The registered manager has made a number of improvements to this area of practice. For example, young people's meetings are now more child friendly. These sessions focus on the things that matter to the young people, such as planning activities and social events. Staff now routinely ask young people if they think that they receive good quality care and support. This consultation means that young people have the opportunity to influence the

development of the home.

Staff help young people to maintain appropriate relationships with their families. They work with young people and their families, and with each placing authority, to support contact visits and provide emotional and practical support. Consequently, young people do not feel isolated from the people who are important to them.

Young people currently living in the home are not yet of an age to work towards formal independence plans. However, staff support them to participate in usual household chores, such as taking responsibility for keeping their bedrooms clean and tidy. This means that young people invest in the home, and this creates a family atmosphere.

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

Since the last inspection, there have been significant incidents in the home, and within the community, that compromised young people's safety, welfare and well-being. These events concern young people who have now left the home. In response to these incidents, staff did not encourage young people to take responsibility for their actions. Young people did not fully understand the impact their actions had on others because staff did not sufficiently help them to reflect on their behaviours. This shortfall remains outstanding from the last inspection. For example, staff do not always use opportunities to work individually with young people to address their behaviour.

Staff are competent in identifying risk factors that potentially compromise young people's welfare and safety. For young people currently living in the home, risk assessments highlight concerning behaviours and introduce strategies for staff to use to manage these known risks. However, for those young people who have left the service, staff did not act appropriately to either record young people's risks or to take necessary action to reduce these. As a result, these young people were at risk of harm.

Managers and staff have good professional relationships with community and specialist police teams. They work in partnership with allocated officers when young people are missing from the home. Staff ensure that risk assessments highlight young people's specific vulnerabilities, including when they are at risk of sexual exploitation. This collaboration means that when they do go missing, young people are quickly located.

Staff now use a balance of rewards and sanctions to encourage young people to manage their own behaviour. There is an emphasis on the use of restorative sanctions. This approach better helps young people to consider alternative strategies to manage their frustrations. Physical restraint is only used as a last resort. Generally, staff ensure that they complete records of physical restraint in sufficient detail, and include young people's feedback and comments. If records fall below acceptable standards, the registered manager works with staff to improve this area of practice. Subsequently, the registered manager is able to review and evaluate the appropriateness of this measure of control. This promotes young people's welfare.

Staff complete safeguarding and child protection training. These courses include information about safeguarding referral processes, child sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism, and bullying. Nevertheless, staff do not always retain this information. This means that some staff are unsure of how to respond to allegations of abuse or harm, or of their own responsibilities in this referral process. The detrimental impact of this shortfall is reduced because there have been no allegations of abuse or harm since the last inspection. Nevertheless, this lack of knowledge and understanding may compromise young people's safety.

There are a number of new staff now working in the home. However, managers do not consistently deploy the organisation's safer recruitment procedures. As a result, vetting checks are not appropriately verified to determine the suitability of all staff. This potentially compromises young people's safety.

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

The registered manager has experience of working in and managing residential care services for children and young people. He holds relevant qualifications for this role, including the level 5 diploma in leadership and management for residential childcare. At the last inspection, an interim manager was in day-to-day charge of the home. This is because the registered manager was away from the home on an internal secondment. He returned to his principle post in this home, following that inspection.

The home was without young people between July and September 2017. During this period, staff refreshed their mandatory training courses and participated in additional learning opportunities. The majority of staff now hold the relevant qualifications required for this role. This means that most staff have the skills and knowledge that they need to support young people appropriately.

Staff do not receive regular formal supervision. As a result, managers are unable to assess and review staff practice and performance to ensure that this is appropriate. Furthermore, staff do not get the opportunity to reflect on their own staff practice, to learn about what they do well and where they need to improve. This shortfall is detrimental to staff and to young people's development, progress and welfare.

The registered manager prioritises young people's needs and is keen to ensure that these are the focus of the routines in the home. He has made improvements to monitoring systems, which enable him to maintain a better overview of young people's behaviours, risks and achievements. The registered manager monitors the quality of care the home provides, alongside young people's individual progress. These monitoring systems highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the home, and identify patterns and trends that may indicate practice concerns. This ensures that the service is able to demonstrate a capacity to improve.

Partnership working practice between the service, placing authorities, other professionals

and young people's families is mostly positive. One social worker said, '[Name of young person] has settled well, better than I thought possible. The manager makes sure I'm kept informed and communication is good.' It is a noted improvement that, since the last inspection, the registered manager challenges other agencies when their performance falls short of expectations. This means that young people now receive well-planned care and support. Since the registered manager returned to the home, staff practice has improved.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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.

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: SC066917

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Oracle Care Limited

Registered provider address: Unit 54 Wrest Park, Silsoe, Bedford MK45 4HS

Responsible individual: Mark Cole

Registered manager: Michael Lloyd

Inspector

Jo Stephenson, social care inspector

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