

SC389698

Registered provider: Oracle Care Limited

Interim inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home, which is run by a private organisation, is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The organisation operates a registered school.

Inspection date: 31 January 2018

Judgement at last inspection: good

Date of last inspection: 27 June 2017

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

This inspection

The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection

This home was judged good at the last full inspection. At the interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has declined in effectiveness.

Two requirements and two recommendations were raised at the last full inspection. The provider failed to meet one requirement, which will be repeated. A further 12 requirements and two recommendations have been raised at this inspection.

Since the last inspection, there has been an increase in the number of notifications of serious incidents received by Ofsted from the home. This increase coincides with the admission of a third child in October 2017. The incidents include a number of assaults against staff, some of which have required police intervention, and allegations made by the children against the staff. Two children were involved in the majority of the incidents. The home discharged both of these children on separate dates in January 2018. After the home discharged the first child, the behaviour of the second child escalated, resulting in that child's placement also ending.

The manager has undertaken impact risk assessments for children moving into the home. However, the manager and the staff do not take into account the change of dynamics in the group, which has led to two children leaving the home in an unplanned way. Unplanned endings are disruptive to children's placements.

There have been several incidents of bullying. The staff do not consistently record these as bullying incidents, or record that they speak to the victim. A child commented that she had informed the staff and the manager on a number of occasions that she was scared of one of her peers at the home. The child said, 'I felt helpless, and called my mum every day about it. I wrote a proper complaint in a letter and gave it to [the manager] too.' In one incident, the child had vinegar thrown in her face and she put in a complaint. This was not recorded as an incident of bullying and there was no record of this as a complaint. Failure to act on concerns raised by the children and to respond effectively to complaints means that children are not protected from harm and do not feel safe. The staff have not received any training to manage bullying behaviours to ensure that they recognise the signs and symptoms of bullying.

Children have not made progress in their education. Two of the children who have since moved on did not access education when they lived at the home. The child who currently lives at the home has returned to school now that the other two children have left the home; she had refused to attend school before those children moved out. The child said, 'Things at school have got worse. My attendance is down, but I still think I'm doing OK in lessons.' The manager said that there were complications in identifying a school for one of the children, although a place had been identified for her just before she left. Another child did not attend education while living at the home. The plans around education were unclear, and there was no evidence that staff supported the child to access any education either in or out of the home. Failure to reinforce the importance of education means that children are not encouraged to reach their educational potential.

The manager and staff have failed to address the increase in the number of significant incidents and the level of challenging behaviour. They have failed to take effective action when serious incidents have occurred. On two separate occasions, external professionals felt it necessary to intervene in incidents because of the way in which the staff were dealing with the children's challenging behaviour. On one occasion, an ambulance crew member said that a member of staff harmed a child through inappropriate physical restraint. The staff member concerned did not record the restraint properly and, when spoken to, the manager was not aware of the incident. The failure to keep accurate and reliable records of all incidents undermines the ability of managers to take prompt, effective action to deal with problems and to understand their impact on the children's well-being.

There has been an increase in the use of physical interventions since the last inspection. Staff complete the relevant records of the incidents, but these records are not always of good quality or informative. There is little evidence to show that children are always debriefed after an incident or have the opportunity to comment on the hold used. There is a lack of evaluation by the manager. This lack of recording and evaluation means that it is difficult to establish patterns and trends.

There have been some significant changes at the home during the past few months with

several changes to staffing. In one incident, the staff called the police to request their support to manage a child's behaviour. The responsible individual investigated the incident and, during interviews with staff, staff members reported that they did not know the children and had not built up relationships with them. A social worker commented that it was difficult for her child to build relationships with a staff team that was constantly changing, and that she was not kept informed of the changes and difficulties. These changes to the staffing make it difficult for the children to build and maintain positive relationships with the adults who work with them.

The children have care plans, but there is a lack of evidence about the work that the staff have undertaken with the children and when the plans have been updated. This means that staff may not be working with the most current and up-to-date plan for the child. The manager and the staff have not ensured that the risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated after an incident. This means that known risks are not always considered or action taken to reduce them.

The home is not working in line with its statement of purpose. Two of the social workers spoken to commented that they had chosen this provision as the children would receive therapeutic intervention along with one-to-one therapy, but this had not happened. Two of the children have now left the home because the home did not meet their needs.

There are monitoring systems in place, but these are not always updated or easy to follow. This means that the children's progress, patterns and trends in behaviour, and evaluation of the impact of the home on the children, cannot be easily identified.

There has been an increase in the number of incidents of children going missing from the home since the last inspection. The staff try to de-escalate situations and prevent children from leaving the home, and staff follow them to persuade them to return to the home. However, in the majority of the instances, the children are returned by the police and, once the police have left, the child goes missing again. There is a lack of consistency in recording the conversations that the staff have with children on their return from being missing, and the children do not have the opportunity to have return home interviews. Failure to explore and record the reasons that the children are going missing means that the manager and staff are missing opportunities to address this risk-taking behaviour and to understand what additional safeguards should be put in place.

One child, who had moved from secure accommodation to the home, came with a clear risk assessment relating to issues with medication. The manager failed to respond to the identified risk or to put measures in place to reduce the risk. The child took an overdose of tablets while living at the home. Following this incident, the manager and staff failed to update the medication risk assessment. Known risks and actual incidents have not been considered. Failure to inform the staff of risks and provide them with management strategies mean that the administration of medication is not safe.

Not all of the staff have received regular supervision to support them to work with the children safely and effectively, and to help them discuss their practice and reflect on incidents.

Health and safety checks are not thorough. The majority of the fire doors on the upper floor do not close properly. This is a serious issue that was discussed with the manager

during the inspection so that immediate action could be taken.

The home is decorated and furnished to a good standard. The kitchen has recently been updated and now has a bright, modern feel to it.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/06/2017	Full	Good
10/02/2017	Interim	Not judged
20/10/2016	Interim	Not judged
15/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

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 children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. (Regulation 7(1)(c)) In particular, take effective action to respond to children's concerns and complaints.	12 Mar 2018
The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment. (Regulation 8(1)(2)(a)(iv))	12 Mar 2018
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on mutual respect and trust, and 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 understand and	08 Mar 2018

communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable, and have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them. (Regulation 11(2)(a)(xii)(xiii))	
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 understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(v))	28 Feb 2018
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)) In particular, ensure that risk assessments are updated, that the content is shared with the staff and that risk-reduction measures are acted on.	28 Feb 2018
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 to aspire to their full potential and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose. (Regulation 13(1)(a)(b)(2)(a))	12 Mar 2018
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 to aspire to their full potential and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13(1)(a)(b)(2)(h))	28 Feb 2018
The care planning standard is that children receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that each child's relevant plans are	28 Feb 2018

followed. (Regulation 14(2)(c))	
The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines in the children's home. (Regulation 23(1))	28 Feb 2018
The registered person must ensure that the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and any regulations made under it, except for article 23 (duties of employees), are complied with in respect of the home. (Regulation 25(2)(b)) In particular, ensure that all fire doors meet fire safety regulations.	15 Feb 2018
The registered person must ensure that all employees undertake appropriate continuing professional development and receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33(4)(a)(b))	08 Mar 2018
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, 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)(b)(i)(ii)(c))	28 Feb 2018
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))	28 Feb 2018

Recommendations

- When a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)
- The registered person must demonstrate every effort to achieve continuity of staffing so that children's attachments are not overly disrupted, including ensuring that the employment of any temporary staff will not prevent children from receiving the continuity of care that they need. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 51, paragraph 10.1)

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.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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: SC389698

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: Louise Jones

Inspector(s)

Trish Palmer, social care inspector
Ricky D'Arcy, social care inspector

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