

Orange Grove Fostercare Southern Counties

Orange Grove Fostercare Ltd

3, Albourne Court, Henfield Road, Albourne, West Sussex BN6 9FF

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Orange Grove Foster care Southern Counties is a regional branch of a large privately owned organisation, Polaris.

This agency has 75 children in placements and 77 fostering households. The agency provides emergency, short-term, long-term, and parent-and-child placements for children up to the age of 18. The agency also maintains placements for those who have moved onto independence and wish to remain with their foster carer.

The registered manager resigned from the agency in October 2025. A new manager has been recruited and is due to start in February 2026.

Inspection dates: 9 to 13 February 2026

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 6 February 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Overall children are settled living with their foster carers. Children make progress due to the nurturing care they receive and the foster carer's ability to adapt their support in response to their individual needs.

Foster carers are ambitious for children and provide them with life experiences that broaden their horizons. For example, children have enjoyed going on holidays, learning to ski and swimming with stingrays. These activities provide social opportunities and help create lasting, positive memories.

Foster carers support children to develop skills for adulthood. Some foster carers continue to support children once they move out of the home, considering them still part of the family. One child was successfully helped to move to supported living where they are thriving. Some children remain living with their foster carers after the age of eighteen.

Staff and foster carers recognise the importance of birth families in children's lives. Children are helped to see people who are important to them at a level that is sensitive to their individual circumstances and preferences. Where appropriate, children are helped to build positive relationships that are carried into adulthood.

Foster carers are skilled in providing support to children who have a wide range of complex needs and backgrounds, including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Children are helped to explore their religious and ethnic heritage with sensitivity and encouragement to explore their identity.

Supervising social workers provide foster carers with highly valued, responsive guidance and supervision. Foster carers say supervising social workers are 'amazing' and they feel respected and listened to. They see children and spend dedicated time with them. This allows children time and space to express their views, in the knowledge that they will be heard.

When appropriate, foster carers are provided with additional therapeutic support by the agency's therapist. This helps foster carers to learn therapeutic strategies that support placement stability. Children also have external access to therapeutic support to help them process past trauma and manage their emotional health.

Children's health needs are well understood and supported by foster carers. Children are supported to understand their health needs and how this impacts them. They have timely access to local health services and routine appointments.

The agency and foster carers are knowledgeable about children's communication needs and adaptations have been made to the children's guide. However, additional support for children whose first language is not English, is not always in place. For one child this means they cannot speak independently with professionals.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Foster carers understand their safeguarding responsibilities. They are alert to potential concerns and seek support when needed. Foster carers are aware there is always someone available for them to talk to and the agencies out of hours service is effective in providing advice and support.

Children are regularly seen by supervising social workers or family support workers, providing opportunities for them to share concerns privately. Children feel safe and have trusting relationships with their foster carers. They also know who they can talk to outside of their fostering household should they have worries, concerns or wish to complain.

Risk assessments and safer care plans are implemented and updated if new risks emerge. Children are supported to understand potential risks and learn how to stay safe. Foster carers have clear and consistent boundaries that help children to manage their emotions and behaviour.

Foster carers have a sound understanding of the procedures to follow when a child goes missing from home. The agency provides clear protocols to follow, and incidents are reported to professionals. They work effectively to ensure that the child returns home safely and are given the opportunity to talk and reflect on what happened. This approach has been effective for one child whose missing from care incidents have reduced.

Managers respond promptly and thoroughly to any complaints. Complaints made by children and professionals have been listened to and investigated appropriately. Managers explore what happened and take action to make improvements where shortfalls are identified. Children are kept up to date about any follow-up action that takes place.

The agency ensures that allegations are handled fairly, and in line with statutory guidance. Standards of care reviews are carried out when necessary. Appropriate actions and learning are identified to make improvements to future practice. The agency panel and agency decision maker have independent oversight of reviews for additional scrutiny.

Panel demonstrates robust quality assurance function and is centrally overseen by a panel manager. The panel chair is suitably experienced and is supported by a diverse and stable central list. The agency decision maker offers clarity and scrutiny to decision making. Information and reports are submitted within timescales. This enables decision-making to be timely and informed. Where concerns with carers are identified internal investigations and standards of care are completed and carers are returned to panel for review.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

A registered manager has not been working in the agency since August 2025. During this period the responsible individual stepped into this role with the support of a principle social worker. Managers reflected openly on the challenges and achievements experienced in the last year. They have worked hard to stabilise the service and demonstrate a clear commitment to ensuring children continue to receive safe, nurturing care. This has reduced the impact on foster carers and children who continue to feel well supported, valued and listened to by managers who knows the service well.

Staff at the agency feel supported, through regular supervision, annual appraisals, team meetings and case management discussions. Managers consistent leadership, and knowledge of foster carers and children is evident. This means they can provide supervising social workers with meaningful support and reflection. Managers have ensured that there is stable and consistent staff who say mutual team support is strong and they feel valued and listened to by managers.

The responsible individual has clear oversight of the agency and understands the strengths and areas for development. They are proactive in reviewing records and monitoring safeguarding. When patterns or concerns are identified, action is taken to address concerns and make improvements. There is a culture of reflection and continuous development that is shared with the whole agency.

Foster carers value the supervision and flexible support provided to them by supervising social workers. Foster carers have suitable training to meet the needs of the children they care for. Overall training is completed within statutory timeframes. On occasions when there are delays, managers are aware of this and the reasons why. Action is taken to provide additional support to fosters carers to ensure they are completed.

Foster carers are happy with the support they receive from the agency and are very complimentary of their supervising social workers. Their view is that managers are readily available, they listen and support them when needed. Foster carers demonstrate a commitment to the children and supporting them to achieve the best possible outcomes.

What does the independent fostering agency need to do to improve?

Recommendation

- The service has the facilities to work with children with physical, sensory, and learning impairments, communication difficulties or for whom English is not their first language. Oral and written communications are made available in a format which is appropriate to the language of the individual. The procedures include arrangements for reading, translating, and explaining documents to those people who are unable to understand the document. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 25.12)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people 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 Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards.

Independent fostering agency details

Unique reference number: SC485748

Registered provider: Orange Grove Fostercare Ltd

Registered provider address: Malvern View, Saxon Business Park, Hanbury Road,
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Responsible individual: James McGarrigle

Registered manager: Post vacant

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Inspectors

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