

# Orange Grove Fostercare Staffordshire

Orange Grove Fostercare Limited

Staffordshire Office, Unit 16, Newstead Industrial Estate, Trentham, Stoke-on-Trent  
ST4 8HX

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

This independent fostering agency is part of a national organisation that provides fostering services across England.

The agency currently supports 83 carers in 49 households caring for 59 children. Placements are primarily short- or long-term and some carers provide respite care.

**Inspection dates:** 21 to 25 May 2018

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 22 June 2015

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is good because:

- Foster carers provide children with good-quality individualised care and support.
- Children have good experiences of family life, have healthy lifestyles and do well in education.
- Family support workers and a contracted therapist provide good-quality additional help to children and young people.
- Newly recruited carers are well prepared and supported.
- Children are well matched with carers and often experience well-planned introductions.
- Carers are very committed to helping children continue to see their birth families, where appropriate.
- Carers are sensitive to the reasons why children may struggle with their emotions.
- Carers provide good levels of nurture and many of them look for creative ways to show children their love, commitment and interest.
- Children feel part of their foster family and their social skills and confidence improve.
- Children enjoy a wide range of experiences, including sports, holidays and social experiences.
- Carers help children reflect on and understand their history. They help them collect memorabilia of their time in foster care.
- Most children experience long-term stability and are well prepared for successful futures. Their foster carers prepare them well for adulthood or other permanency arrangements.
- Most children feel protected and safe in their foster homes.
- Carers work well with children's schools to ensure that they are safe and that risk-taking behaviour associated with peers is minimised.
- If children go missing from home, there is a well-coordinated response.
- The departure of numerous carers to other fostering services, and four different managers in three years, has not detracted from the quality of foster care.
- The newly appointed manager shows ambitious vision, energy, commitment and high expectations for what all children can achieve.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- Children do not have helpful, child-friendly plans to explain how their carers will meet their needs.
- Children do not get enough child-friendly information about their carers before they arrive in placement.
- Supervising social workers do not give enough recorded advice and guidance to best help carers manage unsafe or anti-social behaviour.
- 'Second' carers do not get enough training and support to best manage teenagers who have challenging behaviour.
- The supervising social work team does not always meet the fostering panel to discuss specific areas of practice.
- Managers have not focused enough on reviewing the practice of carers and

supervising social workers when significant incidents or placement breakdowns occur.

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

### Recommendations

- Ensure that information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. Children are actively encouraged to read their files, other than necessarily confidential or third party information, and to correct errors and add personal statements. (NMS 26.6) This is particularly with respect to ensuring that children and young people have helpful written information about what help, protection and support their carers plan to give them.
- Unless an emergency placement makes it impossible, children are given information about the foster carer before arrival, and any information (including where appropriate, photographic information) they need or reasonably request about the placement, in a format appropriate to their age and understanding. (NMS 11.3)
- Ensure that meetings between carers and supervising social workers have a clear purpose and provide the opportunity to supervise the foster carer's work, ensure the foster carer is meeting the child's needs, taking into account the child's wishes and feelings, and offer support and a framework to assess the carer's performance and develop their competencies and skills. (NMS 21.8)  
In particular, meetings should focus more on providing carers with helpful advice about how to positively manage teenagers' difficult behaviour and maintain positive relationships.
- Ensure that support and training is made available to foster carers, including hard to reach carers, to assist them in meeting the specific needs of the children they are caring for or are expected to care for. (NMS 20.8) This is with particular reference to ensuring that second carers develop good skills for helping teenagers so that allegations and placement breakdowns are minimised and teenagers make real progress with their emotional and behaviour difficulties.
- Ensure that each person on the central list is given the opportunity of attending an annual joint training day with the fostering service's fostering staff. (NMS 23.10) The manager regularly monitors all records kept by the service to ensure compliance with the service's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. (NMS 25.2)  
This is with particular respect to greater focus on, and consultation about, supervising social worker and carer practice following incidents and placement breakdowns.

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Most children make very good progress because carers provide high-quality care. Carers feel well supported by the agency and are confident and enthusiastic about the difference that they make to children's lives. Carers successfully include children in their family life and help them continue to have positive links with their own families wherever this is right for them.

Most children are happy and enjoy a wide range of active, healthy experiences. Many of them excel in sports or performing arts. Their social skills and confidence improve. They enjoy family holidays with their carers.

Carers are sensitive to the background reasons why children often struggle with their emotions. They provide nurture, and many of them look for creative ways to demonstrate their love, commitment and interest in their children. Direct work, carried out by the agency's family support workers and contracted therapist, helps many children overcome particular difficulties. For example, many children have had good help with their anxieties around sexuality, cultural identity and religious beliefs.

Carers help children to reflect on and understand their history. They help them collect memorabilia of their time in foster care. However, children do not read or use their foster care records. Records, including plans, are not child friendly enough. Children do not have clear, simple written plans outlining how their carers will meet their needs and help them overcome their difficulties.

Most children do well in education. Carers and supervising social workers actively contribute to children's learning and help them overcome any emotional or behavioural barriers that affect them accessing school full time.

Children are well matched with carers. If carers are new to fostering, the agency prepares and supports them well. Some children experience well-planned introductions to their foster homes and go on to experience long-term stability with them. Children are often prepared well for a successful future. However, some children still say that they don't find out where they are going until they get to their new carer's home. The agency and placing authorities do not work together effectively to overcome this ongoing issue.

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

Most children feel protected and safe in their foster homes. Carers and supervising social workers understand children's risks and how to manage and minimise them. Some supervising social workers use written agreements as tools to help children understand how and why carers manage their behaviour. The agency puts on workshops to help children with particular safety issues. A recent workshop was about internet gaming and social media. Children said afterwards that they had learned: 'Don't meet people that you don't know on the internet.' 'Don't add people

you have never met.' 'Don't play games that you are not old enough for.'

Carers are alert to whether children's friends are positive and safe. They work well with children's schools to minimise risk-taking behaviours associated with peers, including bullying and self-harm. If children go missing from home, school or social time, carers and the agency respond in a well-coordinated way.

Many children identify the agency's family support worker or supervising social worker as a trusted adult who they can talk to about concerns. Most children report that their carers and the agency listen to them, take their concerns seriously and respond positively. One child said: 'I don't need to, and I don't want to complain, because I am well looked after.'

Children rarely make allegations and complaints about their carers. However, carers do not always respond to teenagers' unsafe behaviour in helpful and therapeutic ways. 'Second carers', in particular, have not always had the training in behaviour management and working with teenagers that they need. Supervising social workers do not always give enough advice, guidance and strategies to ensure that responses to unsafe behaviour are insightful and helpful to teenagers. For example, carers sometimes issue lengthy groundings, internet bans, and payments for damage from pocket money, without enough understanding of the underlying problems and the help required.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

Since the 2015 inspection, the agency has reduced in size. A large number of carers, and the children living with them, left to start a new agency during 2016–17. More recently, another four carer households moved to another fostering agency.

In the last three years, there have been three changes of manager and two changes of responsible individual. Managers have had, and still have, supervising social worker and family support worker vacancies due to staff turnover and planned absences.

Despite all this, children's progress and experience of care have been consistently good. Throughout the last three years, leaders and managers have managed the agency effectively and urgent action has always been taken to address management vacancies.

The newly appointed manager shows an ambitious vision and has high expectations for what all children can achieve. She is planning and providing improvements to the service insightfully and energetically. For example, she recognises that teenagers need more explicit help and has therefore set up a group specifically for them. She also recognises that children have not had individualised assessment of their emotional care needs. She has therefore designed a format for carers, children and supervising social workers to use together. The format provides a clearer agenda for care that promotes emotional and behavioural progress.

Managers actively and regularly monitor the quality of care provided. They identify

their strengths well. However, they do not always identify when practice needs to improve or seek feedback effectively from children and carers when placements have gone wrong. The new manager is receptive to improving this area.

The agency benefits from effective independent assessors and the broad perspective of a fostering panel and decision maker that cover more than this one agency. However, the agency's team of supervising social workers do not get together with the fostering panel to jointly train. This means that supervising social workers and the fostering panel do not have a clear, shared sense of the agency's purpose.

## **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 independent fostering agency 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 Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards.

## **Independent fostering agency details**

**Unique reference number:** SC485797

**Registered provider:** Orange Grove FosterCare Limited

**Registered provider address:** Wavendon Tower, Ortensia Drive, Milton Keynes  
MK17 8LX

**Responsible individual:** Bridgid McCaig

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

**Telephone number:** 01782 645 060

**Email address:**

## **Inspectors**

Rachel Britten, social care inspector  
Julia Wright, social care inspector





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