

Footprints Foster Care Limited

Footprints Foster Care Limited

Units 5 and 6 Longham Business Park, 168 Ringwood Road, Ferndown, Dorset BH22 9BU

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Footprints Foster Care Limited is a private company. It is owned and managed by the responsible individual and the registered manager. This independent agency was registered with Ofsted in March 2012. The agency has recruited six fostering households over the past year. The fostering agency currently has 17 fostering households and 24 children in placement. The agency recruits and assesses its foster carers and provides standard, emergency, respite, short-term, long-term and permanent placements for children and parent and child placements.

Inspection dates: 19 to 23 March 2018

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	outstanding
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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: 19 May 2014

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is good because:

- The agency is led and managed by an experienced and knowledgeable registered manager. She demonstrates a clear vision and has provided the agency with consistency and stability. She is supported very well by a qualified and experienced responsible individual who shares the same passion and enthusiasm.
- There is impressive evidence of the progress of the children who live with foster carers. They live in caring, safe homes where care is nurturing and of an excellent quality.
- Children rarely go missing. On the very few occasions a child has been reported missing, they are quickly returned and helped by their foster carers to understand how to keep themselves safe.
- The safeguarding of children and foster carers is impressive. Procedures, training and practice are underpinned by current research.
- The agency has slowly and steadily grown in its number of foster carers and children placed. It remains a relatively small agency and can demonstrate high quality recruitment and assessment processes.
- Foster carers are extremely experienced and supported by supervising social workers who routinely use research updates and learning opportunities to develop and enhance their practice.
- Foster carers and professionals speak highly of the agency. Responses to surveys are overwhelmingly positive. There are well-established, robust working relationships with local authorities and other local services.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- The agency would benefit from a more strategic approach. In particular, ensuring better participation by the children and carers in the improvement work.
- Managers, leaders and staff to develop a more effective method of capturing the outcomes of children.
- Managers and leaders to ensure that there are clearer lines of communication between schools and the agency.
- Supervision of the registered manager needs to evidence critical and analytical reflection, identifying how the registered manager is developing her own practice.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children live with foster carers who provide nurturing care. Placement stability is impressive. This is because the foster carers know and understand the children extremely well, and personalised support is given by the supervising social workers. Foster carers speak highly of the support that they receive.

Most of the foster carers have had children living with them for a number of years. They refer to the children as 'part of their family'. Children make excellent progress in all areas as a direct result of the time and effort that foster carers and supervising social workers give to providing great care and attention to children, which ensures that children feel secure and welcome. While it was apparent that outcomes for children placed are excellent, the agency would benefit from developing their strategic analysis of children's outcomes in a more formal way.

Positive working relationships exist between foster carers, professionals and families. All who are involved with the children contribute to producing highly individualised packages of care, which are reviewed regularly against research findings to ensure that children are being provided with the best possible safe care.

An extensive range of training is routinely provided to all carers. However, when a specific need is identified, bespoke training is delivered. For example, secondary trauma and stress training and working with children whose parents have addictions. As a result, foster carers say that they feel informed and have a better understanding, which helps them to support the children.

Foster carers speak very well of the support that they receive in preparation for children being placed with them. A particular strength of the agency is that while it remains small, individual staff are linked with foster carers from the beginning. In doing so, recruitment, referral, assessment, matching and supporting are of a consistently high standard. The knowledge and understanding that each supervising social worker and the managers and leaders have of the foster carers and the children placed are impressive. This means that children's day-to-day experiences are extremely well supported.

The views of foster carers, children and professionals are captured and considered. However, managers and leaders are aware that further work is required to promote consultation and participation in the continued development of the agency.

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

The agency has excellent safeguarding practice. Supervising social workers, managers and leaders routinely refresh their knowledge and understanding of safeguarding by attending training, seminars and conferences.

Children going missing from their foster placements is extremely rare. However, foster carers and staff have an excellent understanding of the reasons why children go missing, and on the occasions when children have gone missing, they have been returned to safety. Following on from these instances, foster carers and supervising social workers take time to reflect and review risk assessments, and where necessary refresh foster carers knowledge through training. A regular newsletter provides updates of any such training to ensure that learning is disseminated to all carers.

Foster carers speak highly of the training that they receive. This equips them with the skills necessary to support children with complex needs. In particular, PACE and secondary trauma and stress training are highly regarded by all carers spoken with. As a direct result of this training, foster carers demonstrate creative ways of thinking, feeling, communicating and behaving. This has led to sustained positive outcomes for individual children and foster carers making children feel safe.

Complaints are rare and dealt with swiftly. Reporting mechanisms are rigorous, which ensures that information is shared promptly with all agencies and professionals. Managers and leaders take every opportunity to reflect and review practice. Following on from one complaint, managers and leaders have already identified a need to bolster communication sharing between some schools. A protocol for schools to share information with the agency is in development and will prevent delay in concerns being reported.

The agency has an extremely well-organised staff recruitment process. Since the last inspection, two further supervising social worker posts have been introduced. As a result, all positions within the agency are filled by highly qualified and experienced social workers in the field of fostering. All staff embrace refresher training where possible. The chair of the panel speaks highly of the staff's skills and expertise. This level of professional practice results in sustained improvement in the lives of children placed.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Since the last inspection, there have been no changes to the management structure of the organisation. As a result of this long-term stability, the agency has grown from strength to strength providing foster carers and children with consistency.

The registered manager and the responsible individual remain the directors and owners of the agency. They have considerable experience in fostering and safeguarding. They demonstrate a clear vision and have focused on a steady growth in the agency. As a result, two supervising social workers have recently joined the workforce to support the increase in foster carers and children placed. While recognising growth, the ethos of the agency has remained that of keeping the child central to all planning.

With the exception of the two new posts, the staff team has remained stable for a number of years. The small cohesive team retains a 'personal touch' that foster carers speak warmly about. They also spoke highly of the advantages of the agency

being small. For example, all staff know each child and carer personally, they can provide support for children without unsettling them and decisions can be made for children quickly. Foster carers said that the manager and the responsible individual were 'amazing' and staff were 'brilliant'.

The personalised approach adopted by the agency's registered persons provides strong leadership. This is evident across all aspects of the agency's operations. Reporting to the board of director's is regular and provides a concise and very thorough overview of progress. The manager recognises further development work is necessary in capturing children's and carers' views, and how these can interface with the improvement of the agency.

The manager prioritises the children's needs at all times. A safe electronic recording and filing system ensures that all information about children and carers is centrally stored. The manager can demonstrate through the data stored improved outcomes for children since they have been placed.

High-quality training and regular supervision are provided to all staff. This makes certain that staff remain up to date with current research practices and legislation. The manager also benefits from receiving regular external clinical supervision. However, recording of these sessions could be improved.

Managers and leaders have established strong, positive relationships with local authorities and local services. This has led to improvements in the children's experiences and outcomes.

The manager and responsible individual recognise that there are a number of areas that would benefit from further development, none of which are detrimental to the well-being or safety of the children.

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: SC442553

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Registered provider address: 7 Cox Avenue, Bournemouth BH9 3LY

Responsible individual: Vanda Leigh

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Inspector

Linda Bond: social care inspector



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