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Yvette Oliver-Mighten
Orange Moon Community Interest Company
@Home Childcare Childminder Agency
Sherwood Rise Business Centre
6 Sherwood Rise
Nottingham
NG7 6JF

Dear Mrs Oliver-Mighten

Inspection of @Home Childcare Childminder Agency

Thank you for your cooperation during the inspection on 7 and 8 February 2017. I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. This was the agency's first inspection and was carried out under the Childcare Act 2006, as amended by the Children and Families Act 2014.

@Home Childcare Childminder Agency is effective.

Leadership and management are effective.

The quality of the agency's services is effective.

The impact of the agency's services on the quality of the education and care provided by its childminders is effective.

Summary findings

The agency has been operating for over a year and has conducted its first checks on the quality of registered childminders. Leaders and staff understand the roles and responsibilities of the agency as a regulator. They provide extensive information about home-based childcare to childminding applicants so that they are fully informed about what work as a childminder entails prior to registration.

Support and advice mentors (SAMs) are thorough in applying the agency's registration processes. Leaders are well informed about individual applications so that the final decisions on granting registration are robust.

Childminders benefit from an extensive support and development package. They receive regular contact and visits soon after registration to check that they are meeting the requirements of the early years foundation stage and to check how their business is progressing. Further visits and regular contact with agency staff support childminders to continually improve and develop their practice.

Safeguarding procedures are rigorously followed by both the agency and its childminders. The agency takes effective action when there is a concern about a child's welfare or the suitability of an adult, an applicant or a registered childminder. Concerns are followed up and further information is sought from other sources, such as health or social care professionals, so that informed decisions are made about the agency's next steps.

Childminders understand that they are registered with the agency and that the agency is their regulator. They greatly appreciate the professional development they receive from the SAMs and value this as one of the main benefits of being registered with the agency. Childminders are less clear about the actions that the agency can take should a concern be raised about their practice. The agency's statement of purpose lacks some clarity and detail, especially around timescales, about this aspect of its work. This does not detract from the agency's overall effectiveness as a regulator. Parents are unclear about the role of the agency. Nevertheless, the agency does distribute helpful information to parents through its childminders.

The agency's leader recognises that the existing staffing structure will change when the agency becomes more established. Although the current SAMs are freelance workers, the structure works well and the team is effective in how it supports and develops its workforce. Documentation, including records of contact and details of the support and training childminders have received, is thorough and updated as a matter of routine. Other documentation is not as robust. While the SAMs regularly have one-to-one meetings with the agency's leader, records of these meetings, including discussions about the quality of their work, are not as well recorded.

Recommendations

- Improve the quality of record keeping about staff performance.
- Clarify, in the statement of purpose, the agency's enforcement procedures, including timescales, so that childminders have a clearer overview of the enforcement action that can be taken by the agency.
- Improve parents' understanding of the role and responsibilities of the agency and the services it provides.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the childminder agency

- There is a clear and ambitious vision for the agency, which is focused on improving the quality of registered childminders' practice and allowing individual businesses to grow and flourish. The services the agency provides are innovative and have a strong focus on home-based childcare. The agency's leader has high expectations of both her staff and the childminders registered with them. She is ambitious for the agency to develop and has innovative plans in place.
- The recruitment procedures for staff and childminders are robust. All agency staff and childminders have identity, suitability and criminal record checks. The agency is rigorous in investigating further when it has concerns about aspects of an applicants' suitability in order to make an informed decision on registration. The importance of being a suitable person to work with children is communicated clearly to applicants right from their first contact with the agency.
- The agency has established effective working relationships with the local authorities that have registered childminders, so that the childminders have access to information about local safeguarding procedures. The agency's leader and the SAMs have all completed designated safeguarding lead officer training. Their knowledge is put to good use in training childminders, who do not hesitate to report and refer concerns about children to the appropriate agencies, including the police.
- There is a robust system in place to check on the quality of childminders' practice. When improvements are required, action points are raised with childminders and subsequent checks are made to ensure that practice improves quickly. The strong focus on securing good quality teaching and learning is a hallmark of the agency's work. Records are reviewed and monitored by the agency staff so that they maintain a clear oversight of the quality of provision. Checks on the performance of agency staff are frequent. Records of this process lack sufficient detail to show that staff are managed and monitored just as well as the agency's childminders.
- In its capacity as the regulator, the agency uses its 'complaints about a childminder' procedure effectively. Complaints and concerns from parents are explored and reviewed promptly. Agency staff identify areas for improvement swiftly, when needed, and communicate these clearly to childminders.
- The agency is not afraid to refuse registration. It understands that, as the regulator, there are enforcement actions that can be taken against a registered childminder if circumstances require it. This aspect of the agency's work is not as clearly communicated to childminders as others. The statement of purpose is unclear in some aspects of the processes and timescales for enforcement procedures.

The quality of the agency's services

- Childminders receive good quality training from the agency. This is helping them to reflect on their practice and evaluate the quality of their own work. Learning for childminders is both theoretical and practical. Childminders have opportunities to meet, together with the children, for practical training such as outdoor learning in

the park. These sessions are led by agency staff who model good practice and help childminders to understand the principles that underpin effective working.

- The agency has a comprehensive collection of model policies and procedures that are shared with childminders. Agency staff check that childminders are personalising and using these policies appropriately. Childminders implement effectively safeguarding procedures and equality and diversity policies.
- The agency is focused sharply on improving the quality of childminders' practice. Staff provide individualised programmes of support and training to childminders. For example, when they have reviewed observation and assessment records and found them to be weak or of poor quality, they skilfully worked with the childminders to secure improvements.
- Agency staff keep careful records of their contact with childminders. Checks on the quality of childminders' work are thorough and honest. When weaknesses are identified, agency staff make these very clear to the childminders using written feedback. This typically includes clear targets for improvement, the actions they need to take, and the timescales for completion.

The impact of the agency's services on the quality of the education and care provided by its childminders

- Children are safe and secure while in the care of the agency's registered childminders. Staff prepare childminders well for working with children; they ensure that childminders understand and meet the requirements of the early years foundation stage. The actions taken by childminders, when an incident occurs or they have concerns about a child, are prompt and appropriate.
- Notes of visits and discussions with agency staff illustrate that children have a wide range of experiences. Staff check that children's development is progressing in all areas of learning. When they identify concerns about a childminder's practice, they tackle this head-on and work with the childminder to improve and develop their understanding.
- The agency has started to gather information about different groups of children cared for by childminders. Checks on children's progress are monitored by childminders and agency staff using a bespoke electronic record keeping system. Childminders with large numbers of children on roll are well supported to identify differences in outcomes between groups of children, for example between children who speak English as an additional language and their peers. This is helping childminders to identify where they need to amend their plans so that children who are falling behind can catch up quickly.
- Childminders choose to register with the agency because of the quality of the package that is in place to support their business development and their work as a childcare provider. Childminders are enthusiastic in their praise about the range of services, training and support that the agency provides. Parents are equally complimentary about the quality of the childminders' work and the impact on their child's development. Parents are not as clear about the agency services and its role as the regulator of childminders.
- Childminders do not shy away from tackling discriminatory attitudes towards different groups of people, illustrating how effectively they are educated and

supported to promote British values. The agency's British values policy, which is available for childminders to use, is informative and provides helpful links to information and training for the childminder and parents.

I am copying this letter to the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

This inspection was conducted by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Early Years Senior Officer. They undertook visits to one registered childminder and one childminding applicant. They spoke to three childminders to seek their views about the quality of the agency's services and support. Inspectors also took account of the views of parents spoken to during the course of the inspection. They looked at childminder case records and checked the robustness of registration processes. The inspectors had discussions with the nominated individual and the SAMs who work for the agency and checked a range of policies, procedures and other documentation. One inspector listened to an online briefing with a prospective childminding applicant. The agency's implementation of its complaints procedure was checked.

Information about the agency

@Home Childcare Childminder Agency registered in December 2015. Orange Moon Childcare Community Interest Company is the parent organisation under which the childminder agency operates. The agency operates from a central office in Nottingham and currently has 18 registered childminders located across Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, Derby, Leicestershire and Sheffield. It registers childminders on the Early Years Register and the Childcare Register. The agency employs two SAMs. These roles are currently being filled on a freelance basis with a view to having permanent staff in these roles in the future.