

1236916

Registered provider: Utopia Children's Services Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately operated home provides care for up to three children. The home is registered with Ofsted to provide care for children who have experienced social and emotional difficulties.

At the time of the inspection, three children were living in the home. The registered manager has been registered with Ofsted since June 2016.

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 June 2025

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 children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 16 July 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16/07/2024	Full	Good
26/09/2023	Full	Good
01/11/2022	Full	Good
21/02/2022	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The inspector saw all three children living at the home and spent individual time with two. These children shared their views about life at the home, including their experiences, relationships with staff, and how safe and settled they feel.

Children are safe and well cared for. They experience positive relationships with staff, and say they feel listened to and supported. Children are encouraged to participate in a variety of activities and can make choices about how they spend their time. They are relaxed and at ease in their home. One child commented that this is the 'best place they have lived'.

Children said that they feel listened to and understood. Staff are strong advocates and make sure that children's opinions are taken seriously when planning their care and day-to-day routines. Children feel comfortable speaking openly and know that staff are on their side.

Children have made progress since moving into the home. They have developed increased confidence, stability, and a greater sense of purpose. All children are now attending education or employment, and they each have clear aspirations for their future. Leaders and managers support these ambitions and celebrate children's achievements.

Staff treat children with kindness and respect, including around children's identity and how they see themselves. Staff work hard to make sure each child gets support that fits their individual needs and experiences. When staff feel unsure or out of their depth, they ask for advice and leaders respond by arranging relevant training, which helps staff feel more confident and keeps their skills up to date.

The home promotes a strong sense of belonging and celebration. Special occasions, including birthdays and holidays are marked with personalised activities, meals out, and thoughtful gestures that help children feel valued. Families are welcomed into the home and encouraged to take part in these moments, which strengthens children's connections and identity.

Children are supported to move into the home in a planned and thoughtful way. The registered manager reviews all available information and consults with the child's social worker prior to admission. This careful process helps ensure that the home can meet the child's needs and promotes a positive start.

Children are supported to develop independence and prepare for adulthood. Staff offer consistent practical and emotional guidance, helping children develop the skills and confidence they need to take greater responsibility for their lives.

One young person was supported to stay at the home beyond the age of 18 to complete their education and make a successful transition into independent accommodation. Leaders and managers continue to stay in contact with children after they have moved on, which demonstrates the depth of care and the lasting relationships the team builds.

The home provides a welcoming and child-focused environment. Communal spaces are well used and feature a range of age-appropriate games, including a pool table. Photographs displayed around the home reflect positive experiences between staff and children. Children's bedrooms are personalised and reflect their individual interests, contributing to a strong sense of identity and belonging. However, some areas of the home require attention. Internal walls, doors and doorframes show signs of wear and tear and would benefit from repainting. There are cobwebs visible in certain areas, and parts of the home and garden need updating.

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

Staff have a strong understanding of the children and their individual needs. This enables staff to identify risks early and respond with considered and personalised support. When children make mistakes, staff use these moments as opportunities for learning, promoting reflection and positive choices. As a result, children's negative behaviours have significantly reduced over time. This positive change is supported by the consistency, emotional warmth and stability that staff provide.

Restraint has not been used in the home for over a year. Staff understand why and when restraint may be used. They use de-escalating and calming techniques alongside their positive relationships and humour with the children to manage any upsets that might occur.

There have been no incidents of children going missing from the home during this inspection period. This marks a significant and positive improvement, particularly for one child who had previously experienced frequent episodes of going missing. Staff have worked consistently to build strong, trusting relationships and help the child develop more positive coping strategies. As a result, the child feels more secure and settled in the home environment.

Staff have an understanding of safeguarding procedures and apply them effectively in practice. Staff work closely with children to help them understand how to keep themselves safe. As a result, children feel confident in seeking support and raising concerns.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers know the children well and promote their individual interests and identities. They have high expectations and aspirations for each child, which helps build children's confidence. Leaders can clearly describe the progress children have made since moving to the home and demonstrate a sound understanding of their needs. They

are strong advocates for children and challenge other professionals when needed to ensure that children's voices are heard and their best interests are prioritised.

The registered manager is respected by staff and one person commented that they feel lucky to work with a management team that is so 'dedicated and focused on children'. Another said that 'they take great pride in calling work my other family'. Staff said that they feel able to speak their minds and that they feel listened to.

Families and professionals speak positively about the registered manager and the staff team. They describe the team as caring, committed and focused on the best outcomes for the children. Families report feeling welcomed into the home and valued as part of the children's lives. One parent stated that staff had 'helped make their child into a beautiful adult', reflecting the strong and lasting impact of the care provided.

The registered manager uses both internal and external monitoring processes to evaluate the quality of care provided in the home. Regular oversight helps ensure that practice remains focused on the needs and experiences of children. Through these systems, the manager has a clear understanding of the home's strengths and areas that need development. However, monitoring reports have not consistently been completed and shared with relevant professionals within expected timescales.

Staff receive regular training, including updates that reflect current guidance and best practice. This ensures that staff remain alert to emerging risks, such as those related to online safety or exploitation. On one occasion, a significant event was not notified to relevant authorities because it related to a historic concern. Although safeguarding procedures were followed correctly at the time, this incident should have been reported in line with expectations.

The home benefits from a stable and consistent staff team, with minimal changes since the last inspection. No agency staff have been used, and team members describe the home as having a 'family feel'. Staff work well together, drawing on each other's strengths to provide consistent and child-centred care.

Staff feel well supported by the leadership team and receive regular, reflective supervision that promotes their personal and professional development. The strong sense of teamwork and shared values helps create a nurturing and predictable environment for children.

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, The 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 registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child protection enquiry involving a child— is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(d)(i)(ii) (e)) In particular, the registered person should ensure prompt notification to HMCI of serious incidents.	27 June 2025
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months. In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children's home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children.	27 June 2025

After completing a quality of care review, the registered person must produce a written report about the quality of care review and the actions which the registered person intends to take as a result of the quality of care review ("the quality of care review report").

The registered person must—

supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed; and

make a copy of the quality of care review report available on request to a placing authority, if the placing authority is not the parent of a child accommodated in the home.

(Regulation 45 (1) (2) (3) (4)(a)(b))

In particular, the registered person needs to make sure that the regulation 45 report is written and sent promptly to HMCI.

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that children are provided with a home environment that is in a good state of repair, to make it comfortable for children to live in. In particular, the kitchen and some of the communal areas should be brought up to standard. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 7, paragraph 3.7)

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 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: 1236916

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Utopia Children's Services Ltd

Registered provider address: Duncan Woodger, Unit 9, Wheatstone Court, Davy Way, Waterwells Business Park, Quedgeley, Gloucester GL2 2AQ

Responsible individual: Carleen Dobson

Registered manager: Leon James

Inspector

Karen Hallam, Social Care Inspector

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