

1256639

Registered provider: Utopia Children's Services Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is operated by a private company and provides care for up to four children who experience social and emotional difficulties.

At the time of the inspection, two children were living in the home.

The registered manager has been in post since October 2023.

The inspector was aware during this inspection that a serious incident that occurred at the setting since the last inspection is under investigation by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the incident were considered alongside other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 May 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: 5 November 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/11/2024	Full	Good
11/07/2023	Full	Good
08/06/2022	Full	Good
31/01/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

During the two-day inspection, the inspector spoke with both children individually, giving them a chance to share their thoughts and experiences.

The home has a warm and welcoming feel, with plenty of space inside and outside for children to enjoy their own personal areas. A large dining table brings everyone together for meals, creating a sense of connection. The children's bedrooms are spacious and of a good standard. Each child has decorated their bedroom to match their style and personality, making it a comfortable and familiar space.

Staff and children share warm and friendly interactions, creating a positive and supportive environment. Staff take a genuine interest in children's experiences, offering consistent praise and recognition for their achievements. They are enthusiastic about helping children stay connected with family and making sure that they have meaningful and enjoyable experiences. Open conversations are encouraged, allowing children to share their thoughts, emotions and concerns and knowing that staff will act in their best interests.

Children are making progress. Their healthcare and educational needs are being met, with both children currently attending education. While they are not yet in full-time education, their attendance has improved. During periods when children are not in school, staff ensure that they remain engaged by providing appropriate educational activities, supporting their continued learning and development. The registered manager works closely with professionals to make sure that children's needs are met.

Children actively participate in various activities in the home. One child, for example, attends the gym with staff, goes swimming, and enjoys playing with construction toys. Photos of children and staff are displayed on the walls, capturing moments of them having fun together. Special occasions are celebrated with cakes, meals out and birthday parties. The registered manager hopes to take the children abroad on holiday this summer, creating meaningful experiences and lasting memories for them.

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

Children have expressed that they feel safe in the home. Staff provide a supportive environment where children are encouraged to share any concerns openly. When safeguarding issues arise, staff act promptly, reporting them to the appropriate professionals to ensure children's protection. There has been one significant incident since the last inspection. Leaders, managers and staff have engaged in thorough reflection following this incident, examining lessons learned to strengthen team practices. Staff are undertaking specialist training and have introduced measures to reduce risks, aiming to prevent similar incidents in the future.

Staff follow the agreed safety plans when children go missing from the home. They look for the child in the local area and the places they may go to. They try to contact the child and their friends and family, and they report the incident to the police. Staff welcome children with warmth when they return home and show curiosity about where they have been and what they have been doing. This helps staff to assess whether there are any further safety concerns that the child may need support with.

Individualised plans for the children reflect the support they require. Staff are consistent in their responses to children, which makes them feel secure. As a result, restraint is rarely used in this home. Staff clearly understand when and why restraint may be necessary. They use de-escalation and calming techniques, as well as their positive relationships and humour with the children, to manage any upsets that might occur.

Since the last inspection, staff have implemented 11 consequences to help children understand how their behaviour affects themselves, their peers, staff, and the wider community. Each time, staff encourage children to reflect on their actions and consider different ways they could respond in the future. The registered manager keeps an oversight on how consequences are applied, making sure that they are fair and effective and help children take responsibility while learning and growing.

Staff engage children in conversations about safety through formal and informal discussions. There has been a current focus on online safety and healthy relationships, equipping children with the knowledge that they can make informed decisions and better protect themselves. By using relatable examples, staff ensure that the guidance is practical and meaningful, helping children apply these lessons in real-life situations.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is respected by staff. One member of staff commented that they feel valued and lucky to work with a management team that is so dedicated and focused on children. Another member of staff said that the management supports their development and invests in them. Staff say they feel heard and are able to speak their minds and challenge senior managers.

The registered manager recognises the progress children have made since arriving at the home and demonstrates a strong understanding of their individual needs. They are effective advocates for the children, ensuring their welfare and support. However, on one occasion, more decisive action could have been taken to fully meet a child's needs by escalating concerns to senior management with greater tenacity.

Staff feel supported by the management team, and they have regular supervision, which is of a good standard. It is reflective and looks at staff's personal and development needs. Supervision gives staff the opportunity to discuss the children's needs, development and progress made. When new staff join the team, they receive a robust induction and are given time to complete online training.

The registered manager has oversight of the quality of care through internal and external checks. They have a good understanding of what the home does well and where improvements can be made. Feedback from children, social workers and education professionals helps to shape their approach, ensuring that the home continues to meet the needs of the children.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that they proactively advocate for children and are forceful in their challenge to the relevant individuals so that children's needs are met. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 11, paragraph 2.4)

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: 1256639

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: Sarah Gilkes

Inspector

Karen Hallam, Social Care Inspector

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