

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 owned by a private company. It provides care for up to four children who experience social and emotional difficulties. On the day of the inspection, four children were living in the home.

The registered manager has been in post since October 2023.

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 November 2024

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

Date of last inspection: 11 July 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/07/2023	Full	Good
08/06/2022	Full	Good
31/01/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
07/01/2020	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff value children and work hard to establish meaningful relationships with them. Children trust staff because they are reliable, respectful and consistent in their delivery of care. Staff's care towards children is nurturing and playful. Children know that staff will listen to them and act in their best interests. They have open conversations with staff, routinely sharing their views, feelings and worries.

The registered manager and team leaders prioritise children's education and training, knowing that this will benefit their future prospects. They have a good track record of helping children to return to education. Staff have supported children to overcome barriers to learning, and they quickly recognise when children are struggling to remain focused due to external factors. In these instances, they have regular chats with children, highlighting the importance of education.

Staff make good efforts to help children achieve positive health outcomes. They understand the impact of neglect, and they support children to develop new routines that promote their well-being. For example, they remind children to shower, take them to the dentist and promote balanced diets and exercise. Some children struggle to accept help, but staff remain consistent.

The registered manager and team leaders strongly advocate for children to spend time with people who are important to them. They have supported children and their families to safely achieve unsupervised family time, including overnight visits. They also encourage stronger bonds by inviting children's families and friends to the home. For example, they recently had a Halloween party, and the children were delighted when they could extend invites to people who matter to them.

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

Staff have the knowledge, skills and experience to care for children who require sustained support to overcome trauma and adversities. Staff have a good understanding of children's individual needs and vulnerabilities. This enables them to anticipate children's behaviours and the risks around them. They have open conversations with the children about these topics, enabling the children to express their views and feelings.

When children display distressed or concerning behaviours, staff intervene with care and compassion. They help the children to reflect on their behaviour and propose healthier coping strategies. They model appropriate boundaries to children and set clear expectations about behaviour. Physical interventions are relatively infrequent but when staff have resorted to using them, they have been proportionate.

Staff allow children to have age-appropriate freedoms while helping them to navigate the inherent challenges that come with this, for example social media use and wanting to

impress peers. Staff have a good understanding of the risks in the local area, such as the glamorisation of gang culture. They work with a local charity that supports children to understand the dangers associated with this.

The registered manager responds appropriately to concerns made against staff. Although this is a rare occurrence, she prioritises the children's welfare by ensuring that concerns are investigated and risk mitigation strategies are in place. The registered manager ensures that safeguarding concerns are escalated to external professionals. However, on some occasions, Ofsted has not been informed of notifiable events.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is a child-focused and inspirational practitioner who is genuinely committed to helping children have good experiences and achieve positive outcomes. She models her approach to staff, who exhibit the same enthusiasm and commitment towards the children. Social workers, school staff and parents spoke positively about the care children receive. One parent said staff 'worked wonders' for their child. Another parent said that the home was 'brilliant', and she believed staff 'adored' her child.

The registered manager and staff maintain relationships with children who leave the home as part of their transition to adulthood. An adult who previously lived at the home described the staff team as 'family' and said, 'If it wasn't for them, I wouldn't be where I am.' He explained that the registered manager helped fund his new home and supported him to start a successful business.

The registered manager has encouraged staff to develop meaningful relationships with children's parents to promote collaboration. For example, staff have taught parents about healthy meals and portion sizes, and they have educated them about the risks associated with carrying weapons and going missing from home. While some parents are reluctant to accept advice, others have taken learning on board, which means their children benefit from consistent messages and boundaries.

The registered manager challenges other professionals when she thinks they fall short of their duties towards children. For example, she highlights when local authority plans for family time or reunification do not take account of children's views, expressed verbally or via behaviours. She has supported children to have fun family time in the community, funding activities for them and their families.

The registered manager and leaders are working with a third party to develop a software program that supports children's transitions into care. They have shared their vast experience and knowledge with the developer, which has contributed to the program content. The draft program allows children to explore the home, meet the team and envisage what their bedroom could look like. It will also enable children to communicate with the team before they move in.

Staff speak highly of the registered manager, stating that she 'always goes above and beyond for the children'. Staff are confident in their delivery of care because they are supported to fulfil their roles through training, team meetings and monthly supervision. Staff enjoy their roles and feel valued by their manager, who is invested in their development.

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: Unit 9, Wheatstone Court, Waterwells Business Park,
Davy Way, Gloucester GL2 2AQ

Responsible individual: Post vacant

Registered manager: Sarah Gilkes

Inspector:

Tara Webb, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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