

1256639

Registered provider: Utopia Children's Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private company. It is registered to provide care for up to four children with social and emotional difficulties.

The manager has been registered since March 2021.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspection on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 23 November 2020 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 31 January and 1 February 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
---	--

How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
---	---------------------------------

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
---	---------------------------------

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 7 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: declined in effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/01/2020	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
26/06/2019	Full	Good
18/09/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good
08/02/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Overall, the three children living in the home have made progress from their starting points. Regular attendance at school by all the children has meant that they have progressed their learning and enjoy having time with their friends. One child now cycles to school, which is a significant achievement for them.

Children have opportunities on a day-to-day basis to attend clubs, get involved in activities and visit their families. As a result, the children have developed their confidence, formed positive relationships with their peers, including having 'sleepovers', and spend time in the community safely.

One child is being supported to achieve a healthier weight. However, more work is needed to ensure that all staff follow this child's healthy eating plan consistently.

The staff know the children well and show them genuine warmth and care. The inspector observed staff engaging with children in a supportive, caring and sensitive manner, and the children interacted well with the staff.

Nevertheless, while it is recognised that most of the staff have the necessary skills and experience to care for the children, good practice is not consistently applied. This has meant that the children are not always appropriately supported. Leaders and managers have not always been effective in ensuring that all the staff consistently respond to the behaviours of the children in line with their plans. This failure has had a detrimental impact on one child's behaviour.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Leaders and managers have failed to take swift enough action to address staff conduct issues. They did not apply sufficient professional curiosity and rigour when investigating the conduct issues. Additional information of concern relating to staff practice was shared with Ofsted during the inspection. Proactive action was taken by the manager during the inspection to ensure that the concerns did not negatively affect children.

Staff's response to the children's behaviours is not always consistent. This is despite there being clear, individual risk assessments in place that provide details of what action to take to protect children.

On the occasions that staff are required to physically intervene and hold a child, it is done so safely and proportionately. Staff use key-work sessions effectively to help the children to understand why the staff have physically intervened. This leads to

compassionate, proportionate and warm responses from staff, which results in children learning from their experiences.

Staff undertake a range of training in safeguarding matters. Staff undertake online courses while waiting for facilitated courses. This ensures that they have some basic knowledge of safeguarding practice.

Children rarely go missing from the home. If this does happen, staff are proactive in their responses. They follow each child's missing-from-home protocol and report to all relevant agencies in a timely manner.

The staff team has remained relatively stable since the last inspection. The recruitment of staff is sufficiently robust.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The registered manager has worked hard to ensure that the children and staff have been supported during what has been a challenging period that has included the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. One social worker spoke positively about how the regular communication with the manager during this period has enabled them to keep up to date with the progress their child has made.

In the main, the registered manager communicates well with external professionals. In particular, the manager has collaborated well with a school to address bullying issues and made sure that school transport does not have a stigmatising effect on one child. That said, in one case that was identified during this inspection, a lack of professional curiosity and good oversight prevented the wider sharing of information to the local authority designated officer and Ofsted.

The views of the staff who contributed to the inspection were mixed. Some spoke negatively about their experience. They commented on the impact of not always having sufficient staff and said that practice is not always consistent. Other staff said that they feel supported by the registered manager. Staff receive regular supervision and good training opportunities.

The registered manager has, for the most part, ensured that there has been enough staff to support the children in line with their risk assessments. However, it was noted that, on three occasions during the COVID-19 pandemic, there has not been sufficient staffing in the home overnight. On these occasions, the registered manager mitigated the risk by ensuring that there is an on-call system and support staff next door to the home.

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, 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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(v)(vi)(vii)) This relates specifically to all staff adhering to the care plans and risk assessments of each child. When concerns are raised, staff must ensure that they are reported immediately to the necessary safeguarding professionals.	8 April 2022
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare.	8 April 2022

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home’s statement of purpose; ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(f)(h)) This relates specifically to the registered manager ensuring that all staff’s practice is consistent and safe. Leaders and managers must apply rigour, challenge and scrutiny when safeguarding concerns and poor practice are identified. Leaders and managers must ensure that there are sufficient staff in line with each child’s care plan across a 24-hour period. When the number of staff is insufficient, clear and explicit plans must be in place for how the children will be supported safely.	
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that each child’s relevant plans are followed.	8 April 2022

(Regulation 14 (1)(a) (2)(c)) Leaders and managers must ensure that all staff follow the care plans and risk assessments of each child. In particular, all staff must adhere to all of the children's health and dietary plans.	
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(e))	8 April 2022

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 Limited

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

Responsible individual: Louis Stuart-Kelso

Registered manager: Tracey Lane

Inspector

Linda Bond, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022