

1269072

Registered provider: Utopia Children's Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home provides care for three children up to the age of 18 years with social and emotional difficulties. At the time of the inspection, three children were living in the home.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since September 2023.

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 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	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 4 July 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/07/2023	Full	Good
04/10/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
10/08/2021	Full	Good
09/12/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

During the inspection, two children were present, and both were spoken to.

Children said that they feel safe, enjoy living at the home and have good relationships with staff, who they trust. One child commented, 'The home does not feel like a typical children's home because staff have made it so nice.'

Staff's interactions with children are kind and caring, and there is laughter. There are nice conversations and friendly interactions. Staff have built positive relationships with children, which mean that children enjoy spending time with staff and feel relaxed and comfortable in their presence.

The home environment is child friendly and welcoming, with a range of soft furnishings, so it feels homely for children. Children's bedrooms are personalised and decorated in line with their likes and interests, and all bedrooms are clean and tidy.

All children attend regular education provision, although two children are on a reduced timetable. However, this is a significant improvement as, previously, children were not attending. Staff have supported children to secure appropriate education placements, which children now enjoy.

When children move into the home, the registered manager and staff spend time meeting children beforehand, so there are smooth transitions for children. Leaders and managers have created and developed an interactive virtual guide of the home. This means that children who are moving in know what to expect and the day-to-day arrangements for their care.

When children leave the home, staff stay connected with them so they can maintain positive relationships. The inspector spoke to one child who used to live at the home, who said that staff were very supportive and helped them decorate their new flat. They explained that despite not living at the home anymore, staff 'are still my family and I know I will always have a home'.

Most professionals share positive feedback about the care that children receive. They say that children are making progress, and communication with staff is excellent. One child had to move on quickly from the home due to their changing needs and staff being unable to manage these safely. The staff continue to have regular contact with her, and the social worker acknowledges that, despite the challenges, the child benefited greatly from the love and support given to her by staff.

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

Staff spend time talking to children, covering different topics to help them understand and learn what is going on around them. Staff use child-friendly language and a nurturing approach to explore children's feelings and teach them how to keep safe.

Children have developed positive self-esteem and confidence with the help of staff. A child who did not previously leave the home, goes shopping alone and engages in community activities and day trips with staff. Staff have provided opportunities for children to develop independence skills in preparation for adulthood and their transition into the community. For example, one child learned how to rewire a plug and change a lightbulb. Staff have implemented boundaries and routine so that children can make sense of the day and form good habits.

Staff support children to understand how to keep safe online. One child has completed workshops to ensure that they can recognise risk and how to manage it. The child said that they also learned about online safety at school, but they would seek staff support if there were any concerns.

There was a short period of time when children went missing from home, but staff followed individual protocols to ensure that children were returned home and kept safe. Safeguarding concerns are infrequent, but there are robust risk assessments in place to help staff care for children.

Restraint has been used several times to keep children and others safe. Records demonstrate the reasons for restraint, how it was managed by staff, and that it was necessary and proportionate.

The location assessment provides an overview of resources and services in the area, with risks identified and mitigated. However, the registered manager did not consult external professionals, which would help staff to fully understand and consider any location concerns from an outside perspective.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Staff enjoy working at the home and leaders and managers are supportive. Staff said that the home is a nurturing and therapeutic environment, so children feel stable and settled. Staff have built good relationships with children and with each other, which mean that there is a high level of support in the home. All staff understand children's needs, likes and dislikes, and give positive examples of progress for children.

Several new staff members have been recruited since the last inspection. Some staff have remained in post for many years, so there is a mix of experience in the home. Agency staff work in the home occasionally. The registered manager ensures that permanent staff support children with their morning routine and take them to school, to ensure that there is consistency for children. When agency staff work in the home, two regular staff are also present, who are familiar to children. They play with children and

take them on activities, so there are opportunities to build positive relationships with them.

The registered manager shows a high level of dedication to children. They want children to have a loving, stable and nurturing home environment and receive a level of care that helps them to thrive. Leaders and managers are committed to staff and recognise their individual skills and experience. They also promote training and learning opportunities so that staff can upskill and widen their expertise. All staff have either gained the level 3 qualification in residential childcare or are working towards it.

Overall, the registered manager has good oversight of the quality of care that children receive. However, despite the registered manager completing six-monthly reports in line with the children's home regulations, she has failed to seek and include the opinions of children, their parents, social workers and staff, to assist with the evaluation of the quality of care in 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, 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 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. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c))	25 February 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that when conducting the review of the location assessment, the registered person consults with and considers the views of each relevant person. In particular, it is important to consult with services that have a statutory responsibility for safeguarding children in the neighbourhood where the home is located, such as children's services, the police, probation service providers and, if relevant, voluntary services that support victims of crime or young runaways. The purpose of consultation is, as far as reasonably practicable, to gather local intelligence on factors in a neighbourhood that may represent risks to children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.1)

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: 1269072

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:

Registered manager: Lee Wendon

Inspector

Emma Fryer, Social Care Inspector

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