

2720522

Registered provider: Utopia Childcare 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. It was registered with Ofsted in July 2023. It provides care for up to 3 children who experience social and emotional difficulties. There were 2 children living in the home at the time of the inspection.

There is a suitably experienced and qualified manager, who registered with Ofsted in July 2024.

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 May 2026

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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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: 4 November 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/11/2025	Full	Good
06/01/2025	Full	Good
26/10/2023	Full	Good

Summary of findings

Children's experiences and progress in the home are variable. Staff understanding of the impact of children's life experiences is mixed, leading to inconsistent quality of care for children.

Staff conduct is an area of concern. When incidents involving children occur, staff do not consistently follow procedures to report and record such events.

The registered manager is dedicated to the home and children in her care. Recent changes in senior leadership have strengthened oversight and introduced changes, positively impacting the quality of care for children.

Inspection judgements

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

Since the last inspection, no children have moved into the home. One child has left following a planned and carefully supported move that was sensitive to their individual needs. Staff have demonstrated a commitment to maintaining a relationship with the child. This child-centred approach helps children to feel valued.

The home environment is comfortable and well maintained. Children are supported to personalise their bedrooms, promoting a sense of belonging. For example, one child's request to paint their bedroom a vibrant colour was encouraged and supported by staff.

Children's experiences and progress in the home are mixed. Some children have developed secure and trusting relationships with staff; however, this is not consistent across the team. At times, children have expressed concerns about staff behaviour. Staff understanding of children's needs and the impact of their life experiences is variable. As a result, children do not always receive consistent care, and responses to behaviour are not always appropriate. Although these concerns have been recognised by managers and steps have been taken through training and reflection, this work is at an early stage and not yet embedded in practice.

Progress in education is also variable. One child is settled in school and thriving, with plans in place to sit examinations in the next academic year. However, the other child's educational experience has declined, resulting in a reduced timetable. While staff provide support through structured routines and transport, the situation is impacting negatively on the child's emotional wellbeing and requires further action.

Children benefit from a range of positive experiences. Staff support them to engage in activities such as fishing, singing and visits to the beach. These opportunities help to build children's confidence and create positive memories.

Staff promote important relationships for children, helping them to maintain connections with family and friends. This supports children's sense of identity and belonging.

Children's physical health needs are met, and they are supported to attend appointments. However, access to specialist support for emotional health is inconsistent. One child benefits from equine therapy, which has had a positive impact on their wellbeing. In contrast, another child continues to wait for specialist support, despite experiencing increasing emotional difficulties, which heightens their vulnerability.

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

Staff conduct is an area of significant concern. Improvements are required to ensure that children receive consistently safe and appropriate care. Recent incidents highlight ongoing issues, including inappropriate behaviour by staff in the presence of children and poor professional boundaries. These failings have had a direct impact on children's experiences and their sense of safety.

Children's plans identify known and emerging risks. However, there is insufficient evidence that staff consistently understand or respond appropriately to these risks. This is reflected in incidents where children at risk of child sexual exploitation have been exposed to inappropriate and sexualised online material by staff.

Allegations and concerns are investigated promptly and shared with relevant agencies. Children are supported to have their voices heard. However, staff do not always follow procedures consistently when reporting safeguarding concerns. Delays in sharing information with managers and safeguarding agencies have increased children's vulnerability.

Improvements to recruitment practices have strengthened this area, helping to ensure that safer recruitment processes are in place.

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

The manager is committed to the children and has high expectations for the standard of care provided by staff. However, her ability to safeguard children effectively and ensure staff have the necessary skills and knowledge has been significantly limited by a lack of consistent support from senior leaders. As a result, management oversight and safeguarding arrangements have been weakened over a sustained period.

Since the assurance inspection on 30 March 2026, there is clear evidence that decisive action is being taken to address these shortfalls. Leaders have undertaken a comprehensive review of practice, safeguarding incidents and quality assurance processes. This has resulted in the development of a detailed and purposeful action plan, which is in the early stages of implementation.

Recent changes in senior leadership have strengthened oversight. There are early indications that this is beginning to support improved practice and greater stability in the home. Actions to improve staff training, clarify expectations regarding professional conduct and strengthen responses to breaches of boundaries are underway.

While these developments are positive, they are not yet fully embedded, and their impact on practice is not yet sustained. As a result, the staff team remains unsettled, and the stability of the home continues to be affected.

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 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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; 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)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii))	30 September 2026
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. 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's workforce provides continuity of care to 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;

demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account
and acting on—

research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are
best met; and

feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and

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)(e)(f)(g)(i)(ii)(h))

Recommendation

- The registered person should oversee the welfare of the children in their care through observation and engagement with each child's family/carers where appropriate. This specifically relates to ensuring that parents are informed of incidents involving their children in a timely manner. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.23)

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: 2720522

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Utopia Childcare Ltd

Registered provider address: Audley House, 9 Bedford Grove, Alsager, Stoke-On-Trent, Cheshire ST7 2SR

Responsible individual:

Registered manager: Yazmine Hinds

Inspector

Becky Rutter, Social Care Inspector

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