

2733147

Registered provider: Utopia Childcare Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is privately run and provides care for up to three children who experience social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in August 2023 and is suitably qualified.

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 March 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: not previously inspected

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children have developed warm relationships with staff in the relatively short time that they have been living in the home. Consequently, most of the worrying behaviours children displayed when they first moved into the home have stopped or have significantly reduced. The children are now beginning to be able to name some of their emotions and to recognise when they might want a hug or to wrap themselves in a blanket.

The home is spacious, warm and comfortably furnished. Children and staff eat together at a large dining table and the children's en suite bedrooms are decorated to reflect their individual interests. The enclosed garden has play equipment and a space for children to play football.

Staff have taken time to understand each of the children individually. As a result, the children are exploring new interests, hobbies and activities. For example, one child recently enjoyed a sleepover with his Beavers group, another child goes to football training twice a week and plays for a team on a Saturday, and another child has started to go ice skating. Alongside this, staff recognise the children's need for age-appropriate play such as building dens and imaginative play. Memories are captured for the future in monthly photobooks and keepsakes, which are kept in treasure chests.

Staff encourage good behaviour through a number of different incentives. These include colourful and imaginative reward charts that are personalised to each of the children. For example, one chart is based on a child's favourite football team, another on a superhero and a third on a child's favourite computer game. In addition, children earn 'coins' in a slot machine to cash in for rewards or can choose a lucky dip bag. One child's excitement at choosing a lucky dip bag, for having a good day at school, was evident during the inspection. Consequences are rarely used, but when used are proportionate.

Staff understand the importance of education for the children. The virtual school headteacher described the registered manager as a strong advocate for the children. The registered manager has attended many additional meetings relating to the children's education and he has been proactive in identifying the right education setting for each child. Staff support the children with their learning by rewarding the children for good behaviour at school, listening to them read and ensuring that they can join in all school activities such as going to Forest School and dressing up for World Book Day.

The children's routine health needs are well met, and children have attended the dentist and opticians. The children are encouraged to eat a healthy diet. For one child, staff are trying to use his love of football to get him to eat a more varied diet

and try more fruit and vegetables. All three children attend weekly equine therapy sessions and are positively engaging with these sessions.

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

The children have told their social worker they feel safe living in the home. There have been no missing-from-home incidents since the home opened. However, staff understand what they should do if a child did go missing from home.

Key-working sessions are tailored to the children's age and level of understanding. These good-quality sessions help children to identify and understand their emotions such as anxiety and how to keep themselves safe.

Staff understand their safeguarding roles and the registered manager was tenacious in dealing with a concern about a professional outside the home. A safeguarding referral was made quickly and the registered manager followed this up until an outcome was achieved.

Behaviour support plans guide staff on how to support children with their behaviour. There have been no incidents of physical restraint since the home opened.

In collaboration with the children's social worker, the registered manager gave careful consideration to the third child moving into the home, and the planning for the move considered each of the children's needs during the transition period.

Risk assessments are in place and are updated in response to changing circumstances. Bedroom door alarms were not initially needed. However, new information led to this being reviewed and, after consultation with the children's social workers, the door alarms have subsequently been activated.

Safer recruitment procedures are in place to reduce the risk of an unsuitable person working in the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is an experienced and committed professional. The staff team and other professionals speak highly of his leadership, support and commitment to the children. He speaks warmly about the children and is proud of the progress they have made.

The leadership team recognises the importance of supporting staff to do the best they can for the children they care for. Staff were recruited well in advance of the first child moving into the home and they spent time together completing training and developing as a team. The staff team has been stable and consistent since the home opened and the home's bank staff, who the children are familiar with, cover any sickness or other staff absence.

Team meetings, supervision and training are used to equip the staff with the information, skills and knowledge they need to do a good job. Staff say they value the training, enjoy working as part of the team and welcome the support they receive. In addition, staff are able to access confidential therapy if they choose to do so.

The registered manager and staff team have strong relationships with parents and professionals involved with the children. Communication is a strength, with everyone being kept informed promptly of any incidents or things happening for the children. Parents and professionals speak highly of the care given to the children, saying staff are 'brilliant' and go 'above and beyond' what might be expected of them.

The registered manager knows the staff well. Staff have a range of experience from inside and outside residential care work. The registered manager recognises the talents of his team. For example, one member of staff with practical skills has been working with the children to learn to repair a bike puncture and build a herb garden.

Children's views are captured in an age-appropriate way and influence the way the home is run. When requests can't be met, the reasons are clearly explained. In contrast, the children's guide is not sufficiently child friendly or accessible. It is, however, supplemented by a video that was shown to the children before they moved into the home.

The registered manager has a good understanding of the children and the staff, and has a clear vision for the future of the home.

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

Recommendation

- The registered person should provide children living in the home with a guide that is written in a way that is age appropriate and accessible to them. It should be easy for children to understand and include an explanation of the daily routines and how to make a complaint. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including quality standards', page 24, paragraph 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: 2733147

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Utopia Childcare Limited

Registered provider address: Utopia Childcare Limited, Audley House, 9 Bedford Grove, Alsager, Stoke-on-Trent, Cheshire ST7 2SR

Responsible individual: Paulette Hussey

Registered manager: Christopher Neill

Inspector

Janet Fraser, Social Care Inspector

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