

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 owned and run by a private company. It is registered to provide care for up to three children.

The manager registered with Ofsted in October 2024 and is suitably qualified and experienced.

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 October 2025

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: 11 February 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/02/2025	Full	Good
06/03/2024	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

At the time of the inspection, three children were living in the home. The inspector spent time with them.

This home has provided stability for three children, who have lived together for almost two years. They have made continued progress through the individualised care afforded to them. As such, all the children are developing their own sense of identity.

Relationships between staff and the children are nurturing. Staff naturally refer to the children as 'amazing' when talking to them. The home is full of fun and laughter. For instance, during the inspection, the children received new sound speakers that they used to sing and dance along to with the managers.

Staff invest time with the children to create positive memories for them. They ensure that the children participate in community sports clubs and activities regularly. For instance, the children have organised community fundraising events with staff and one child attends golf regularly. Additionally, the children have enjoyed their first holiday abroad. Staff creatively made areas of the home into an airport and aeroplane to help the children to prepare for their holiday.

Staff implement positive routines for the children that promote their health and well-being. These routines are changed for the children as they grow and develop. Staff spend time talking to the children about a range of topics, including personal hygiene and puberty to help them to understand their physical changes.

All children attend education provisions and have good attendance. Their progress and experiences at school are mixed. The manager has raised their concern about one child's school experiences. In the home, activities are used to promote the children's learning and to develop their life skills. For instance, one child was supported to weigh ingredients and to work out timings to bake cookies, which they did extremely well.

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

No children have been missing from the home.

Staff implement boundaries to keep children safe, including online. The children are informed about the rules and time limits in place for their electronic device use. This helps them to maintain healthy routines, including good sleep routines. Additionally, one child told the inspector some strategies that staff had taught them to help to keep them safe online.

In response to self-harming behaviour, staff use consistent approaches to prevent harm.

Until recently, the children have been settled and there have been no significant incidents reported for 12 months. Life events have unsettled one child and there has been a sudden increase in incidents. While staff provide reassurance to the child, there are not well-established strategies in place to help the child to calm quickly when they are distressed. Managers and staff have identified this as a gap in practice. They have taken action to revise strategies used to support the child.

The home's therapist meets with the children to help them to talk about their experiences and emotions. This informs the emotional care and support offered to them by staff. Additionally, managers have acted on the children's views to create a separate space with soft toys that the children said may best support them when they are upset.

During incidents, allegations made against staff members are taken seriously. The manager has forged links with partner agencies to respond to allegations effectively. Investigations are comprehensive and the child's voice is prominent throughout. Children are informed about the outcome and, if appropriate, they are sensitively supported to repair their relationship with staff members.

One incident record showed that a staff member used their professional judgement to prevent harm to the child through the use of restraint. However, there is not sufficient management oversight of the measure used. Additionally, the child's plans do not provide clear direction to staff about restraint measures that may be used in the future.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Managers are committed to providing good care to children and to ensure that they have access to opportunities that enhance their life experiences. A parent's feedback was complimentary about the care provided. They said that 'they look after [child's name] very well'.

Staff retention is strong. Staff are positive about working in the home. One staff member said that 'it is the best job that I have ever had'. External professional feedback described the managers and staff team as 'professional, committed and knowledgeable'.

Over this period, only one staff member has returned to work in the home. Recruitment procedures ensure that all relevant checks are completed to reduce the risk of unsuitable persons working in the home.

Managers use different frameworks to monitor the children's progress. While this helps to identify patterns and trends, actions for development are not linked to understand how this monitoring directly contributes to improved outcomes for children.

Staff receive supervision sessions from managers regularly. However, this is not recorded effectively, including reflection about practice. This limits opportunities to upskill staff to respond to behaviours that challenge them.

Staff training is up to date, including training to learn how to de-escalate incidents. Staff said that they are given the time to complete training, including courses relevant to the children's specific needs. However, training activities are not evaluated to ensure that they lead to effective practice, nor was the impact of training evident in supervision sessions or team discussions.

The home is spacious, well-maintained and arranged for children in mind. For instance, there were Halloween decorations in the home, children played pool, they built Lego at the dining table, and staff have created a movie room for children. Managers have taken action to respond to the requirement made at the previous inspection to remove the motion door sensors, assessed as no longer necessary. Additionally, they said that they plan to reduce the office area space in the home, to ensure that the family home environment that has been created is maintained.

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 ensure that— within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35(b)(i)(ii)(c)) In particular, the manager must ensure that their oversight of restraint use is recorded in line with regulation 35. Additionally, the children's plans should provide clear direction to staff about the restraint measures approved.	31 October 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that training activities are evaluated with staff so that they lead to effective practice. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)
- The registered person should have systems in place so that all staff receive individualised supervision of their practice which is recorded and allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)

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: 9 Bedford Grove, Alsager, Stoke-on-trent ST7 2SR

Responsible individual: Paulette Hussey

Registered manager: Christopher Neill

Inspector

Louise Bacon, Social Care Inspector

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