

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 provides care for up to three children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

At the time of the inspection, three children were living at the home.

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

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 February 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: 6 March 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/03/2024	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

A sibling group of three children live in the home. All three children were present and were spoken to during the inspection. No children have moved into or on from the home since the last inspection. The children are settled and are making progress from their starting points due to the good care that they receive. Children's physical, educational, social and emotional welfare progress is mapped thoroughly against theoretical models and framework. This enables those working with children to better understand them and provide care that is tailored to their needs.

Staff are passionate about their work with children and provide a nurturing environment. There is a focus on providing the children with positive and enriching experiences which are personalised to their interests, such as ice hockey, football, Beavers, cooking and hiking. Special memories are captured by staff in children's monthly memory books and treasure chests. Staff provide effective support for children to explore their individual identities. This helps children to express their individuality and preferences in a safe space. These opportunities also help children to build their confidence and self-worth.

Children build trusting relationships with staff. Children have been able to speak about their history and are navigating their emotions. This helps them to feel safe and supported and promotes their welfare and progress.

Staff provide children with highly attuned and individualised care. This is based on each child's age and stage of development. Staff offer care that considers children's lived experiences and trauma. To solidify the work that is carried out with children, staff are provided support and guidance from a therapist, which helps them to understand and embed the home's therapeutic approach. For example, one child, who has struggled with their behaviour and emotions, has gradually been able to speak about how they feel. This practice has enabled children to feel safe to explore their emotions and express their views.

Key-work discussions with children are of a remarkably high standard. This work is carried out with theory in mind and is creative, meaningful and engaging for children. Themes and subjects are considered with children multiple times, in different and creative ways, to deliver learning and maintain children's interest.

Staff support children's education. Attendance and attainment of two children have significantly improved. One child's progress in school has fluctuated and their difficulties in the school environment have affected the progress that has been made in therapy. The manager has been proactive and works closely with professionals to improve things and establish a plan moving forward.

Children are supported to maintain relationships with their families. Staff support children to understand complex familial relationships and their emotions, to enable

children to express themselves and enjoy the time they spend with their family. A parent was complimentary of the staff team. They expressed that if the children cannot live with them, they would not want the children to live anywhere else.

The home is spacious, and children's bedrooms are personalised. The decor, maintenance and organisation of the home suggest that those who live there are important, valued and respected. The children's bedrooms and living areas of the home reflect children's individuality, achievements and special interests. Children's photos, toys, certificates and artwork reflecting their hobbies are on display in the home.

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

Staff are clear about their responsibilities for safeguarding children. Staff have a good knowledge of safeguarding procedures and children's individual needs. The registered manager shares information about all serious incidents promptly with relevant professionals, and children's plans are updated following any incident. This means that children receive help through a safeguarding practice that is modified in line with their needs.

Staff provide children with consistent, reliable daily routines. Children enjoy and benefit from stability from staff who provide emotional warmth and understanding. This supports children to feel protected and secure. There is an abundance of comprehensive written plans for each child, which are updated monthly. Changes are discussed in team meetings to ensure that staff have up-to-date guidance on how to care for children, mitigate risks and keep children safe. Staff's knowledge of the children is embedded in their day-to-day work, which reduces and minimises the risks for children effectively.

Positive behaviour is promoted consistently, and a range of rewards are used to recognise and celebrate achievements. Children feel a sense of pride and recognise the progress they are making. Incentives help children to understand how their behaviour can affect others and what the repercussions could be if the unwanted behaviour continues. This helps children to develop socially acceptable behaviour.

The manager addresses allegations in the home robustly. When allegations are made against staff, the manager takes appropriate action. This safeguards children while matters are investigated. The manager follows safeguarding procedures and works with social workers to ensure that children are kept informed, know what is happening and what steps are being taken. This ensures that children know that their concerns and worries are taken seriously.

Motion door sensors are not always used in line with children's needs. Door sensors are used in the home to monitor where the children are at night. Risk assessments are not regularly reviewed, which means that the sensors may remain in place when they are not necessary. There is no plan to stop using the sensors nor has any work been carried out with children to assure them that the sensors will be removed. The approach of consistent monitoring of children's whereabouts contributes to an institutional feel at the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is experienced and suitably qualified. He is passionate, child focused and a strong advocate for children. Children are at the centre of everything he does. The manager makes a point of spending time with the children, and the children have a good relationship with him.

An equally enthusiastic deputy manager and responsible individual support the manager. Together, they form a strong leadership team.

The staff team is stable. Agency workers are not used to care for children. As a result, the children are cared for by adults with whom they have an established relationship. Leadership, management and staff cohesion are clear strengths of the home and ensure the safety and welfare of children.

The manager and staff maintain effective partnerships with all professionals to ensure that children benefit from effective help and support. The manager will challenge when required to do so to achieve better outcomes for children.

Staff say that they feel well supported by leaders and managers. Regular supervision sessions, staff appraisals and staff quizzes take place. These provide reflection and development opportunities for staff. Staff receive a wide range of face-to-face and online training. However, staff complete an extremely high number of online training sessions in one day. This reduces the effectiveness of training and insight gained from learning opportunities.

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

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 may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if— the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children; the monitoring or surveillance is no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child's need for privacy. (Regulation 24 (1)(a)(d)) This specifically relates to ensuring that door sensors are only used when necessary and that the rationale for their use is regularly reviewed.	19 March 2025

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate facilities and resources to support their training needs. They should understand the key role they play in the training and development of staff in the home. The manager should ensure that training is undertaken at a pace that allows staff to absorb the learning to make it meaningful. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)

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: Audley House, 9 Bedford Grove, Alsager, Stoke-on-Trent, Cheshire ST7 2SR

Responsible individual: Paulette Hussey

Registered manager: Christopher Neill

Inspector

Tonia Dubidat, Social Care Inspector

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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

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