

Achieving for Children

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Town Hall, St Ives Road,
Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 1RF

Assurance visit

Information about this independent fostering agency

Achieving for Children independent fostering agency for the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead was registered with Ofsted in July 2020.

Achieving for Children is a community interest company which was created in 2014 by the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames and the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames to provide their children's services. The agency delivers fostering services to children in these two boroughs, as well as for the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

The fostering service provides the following types of placement: short-term, long-term, specialist, respite, emergency and sibling placements.

This is the first inspection of the fostering service since it registered with Ofsted in July 2020. At the time of this inspection, the agency had 57 approved foster carers and 77 children in placement. The visit took place remotely due to COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic restrictions.

There is a permanent registered manager in post. She is a qualified social worker.

Visit dates: 16 to 17 February 2021

Previous inspection date: Not previously inspected

Previous inspection judgement: Not previously inspected

Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19, Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for

- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings from the visit

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Foster carers have positive and nurturing relationships with children. The COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging, and supervising social workers have increased the amount of support they give to foster carers. Foster carers have used this time to strengthen and develop relationships with children. This has helped children to feel safe and to continue making good progress.

Despite the challenges faced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, foster carers have been creative in promoting children's learning and health needs. They have also supported children to keep in touch with friends and family who are important to them. This positive approach has ensured that children's education and their physical, social and emotional well-being continue to be developed.

Foster carers, supervising social workers and managers use a variety of methods to seek children's views. This includes consultation with the children's council, and consultation during home visits and joint visits with the children's social workers. Children are able to influence changes to the agency and talk about their personal needs, wishes and feelings. This helps children to take ownership of their care and feel valued.

Foster carers are well supported. The fostering agency has adapted the support available in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Supervising social workers are using a combination of face-to-face support and individual and group virtual support options. This is ensuring that the fostering agency has good oversight of fostering households and children.

The safety of children

Foster carers identify and understand the risks for each child. The registered manager and supervising social workers provide clear guidance for foster carers to

manage risk. When necessary, they organise multi-agency stability meetings to discuss risks and embed plans to keep children safe. As a result, high-risk incidents are low in number.

Placement stability is good. The registered manager has good oversight of the incidents that do occur. Since the agency was registered, there has only been one placement breakdown. Quick action was taken to support the child and foster carers. A bridging placement helped the child to become more stable and to stop going missing from care. She subsequently moved to a long-term foster placement where she is settled and happy. The registered manager and staff are proactive in supporting foster carers to safeguard children and ensure children's well-being.

The registered manager and staff team are continuing to develop systems, resources and practice. For example, they have recently introduced a new supervision form for supervising social workers to use with foster carers. This utilises the Signs of Safety model to capture a more reflective supervision that focuses on the family's plans to keep a child safe. This reflective practice supports foster carers to develop their skills and understanding of the children in their care.

Leaders and managers

Managers have been monitoring when and how they use the amendments made to regulations because of the COVID-19 pandemic. These amendments include flexible working arrangements, virtual unannounced visits and remote panel. These actions have ensured that the agency's operations have been sustained, and foster carers and children are feeling supported.

Supervising social workers are well supported by managers. They receive regular supervision and relevant training. This ensures that staff have the necessary skills for their specialist role.

Managers are developing the staff team as the agency evolves. They have appointed an assistant manager to enhance the management team. An additional supervising social worker has also been appointed to bring foster carer assessments in-house. This increases management oversight and helps standardise the quality of care.

The fostering panel has operated remotely throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This has enabled the fostering agency to continue to approve and review foster carers. Panel minutes clearly reflect the reasons for recommendations and subsequent decisions. Foster carers describe a positive fostering panel experience. Overall, the fostering panel promotes safe, secure and stable placements.

Independent fostering agency details

Unique reference number: 2576030

Registered provider: Achieving for Children Community Interest Company

Registered provider address: 42 York Street, Twickenham TW1 3BW

Responsible individual: Matthew Edwards

Registered manager: Angela Moore

Inspectors

Dawn Bennett, Social Care Inspector

Lydia Isaac, Social Care Inspector

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