

Pilgrims Corner Fostering Limited

Pilgrims Corner Fostering Limited

185 Sea Street, Herne Bay, Kent CT6 8JY

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

The agency offers short-term, long-term, emergency, and parent and child placements. It currently has six fostering households and three children living with foster carers.

There has been no registered manager in post since 23 November 2020.

Inspection dates: 9 to 13 May 2022

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	requires improvement to be good
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The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 7 June 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last inspection, there have been very few new placements. However, there is now far more consideration given to ensuring that children's needs can be met. Decisions about where children should live are well thought out. This includes looking closely at the impact on the other children already living in the home, as well as the skills, training and experience of the foster carers. The information provided to children when they move in is informative, age appropriate and child-friendly.

Children benefit from living in nurturing homes where their individual needs are met. Committed foster carers encourage them to pursue their hobbies and interests as well as develop new ones. Children spoken to during the inspection talked excitedly about their experiences and plans. This includes attending events organised by the agency staff to celebrate special occasions.

Children are making progress and they are happy and settled where they live. Foster carers advocate strongly on their behalf, particularly in relation to their education. This includes making sure that they are in the right school and that they are being supported both academically and emotionally. The agency has good systems in place to monitor children's progress and make sure everything is on track.

Agency staff have developed close and trusting relationships with the children. The records show that they see them regularly and take time to talk to them on an individual basis. Children trust them and can express how they feel. One example included a child spending time with a supervising social worker learning about and exploring their culture and identity.

The agency staff continually look for new ways to involve children in decisions about their lives and how to develop the service. They have access to a range of people to talk to and are involved in the recruitment of new foster carers. As a result, children feel valued and part of the agency family.

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

Supervising social workers know the children well and understand how their past experiences impact their lives. Using a trauma-informed approach, foster carers are supported to care for children in a safe and caring way. Detailed risk assessments and plans provide clear guidance for them to follow. As a result, children feel safe and secure where they live.

Children's health and well-being are actively promoted. The agency has access to a wide range of professionals who are available to provide children with specialist support when needed. Respite foster carers also provide invaluable support to each other and children. These arrangements help to keep placements stable.

Unplanned endings are rare. However, in situations where placements have ended suddenly, there is evidence that the agency has reflected on this and put measures in place to prevent a reoccurrence. This includes providing additional training for all staff and foster carers in strategies to manage behaviour that challenges.

The number of significant incidents is low. All staff and foster carers are trained in keeping children safe. Leaders and managers have also recently reviewed and updated the systems for recording and reporting incidents to ensure that this is done correctly.

The process for ensuring that all staff are safe to work with children is good. Leaders and managers have worked hard to ensure that their files are up to date and contain all the required documentation. Previous employment is now checked thoroughly, including the verification of references.

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

Since the last inspection, the agency has appointed a full-time manager who is in the process of applying to register with Ofsted. They, along with senior leaders, have been working to address the weaknesses in practice and the shortfalls identified at the last inspection. During this time, the service has been reviewed and an improvement plan put into place. This has led to new and improved ways of working and as a result the agency is now meeting its stated aims and objectives.

A significant number of foster carers have transferred to other agencies. This means that the agency is now only working with a small number of families. However, those who have remained spoke highly of the agency staff and managers and feel very involved in the improvements being made. They have willingly accepted the new systems, understand the reasons for them and feel able to share their views about them. This has helped to embed them into everyday practice.

Staff and foster carers describe feeling valued. Leaders and managers treat them as one team and regularly provide opportunities for them to come together. For example, training is often done jointly. Support groups are welcoming and provide a space for everyone to catch up and share experiences. Staff and foster carers also receive good-quality and effective supervision.

Leaders and managers have a good overview of the service. As a group, they meet regularly to share information. The range of monitoring systems is used effectively and gives them a good level of oversight. As a result, overall compliance is good and quality continues to improve.

The fostering panel has been overhauled and is now a strength of the service. New members have been recruited, broadening the range of skills and experience. Records of meetings evidence that panel is providing sufficient scrutiny and challenge of the process. The panel chair, panel adviser and agency decision-maker all work closely together to ensure that panel is functioning in line with regulation.

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 Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards.

Independent fostering agency details

Unique reference number: SC376060

Registered provider: Pilgrims Corner Fostering Limited

Registered provider address: 185 Sea Street, Herne Bay, Kent CT6 8JY

Responsible individual: Sarah Norman

Registered manager: Post vacant

Telephone number: 01227 370808

Email address: admin@pilgrimscorner.co.uk

Inspector

Amanda Harvey, Social Care Inspector

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