

Kasper

Kasper Limited

Kasper Fostering, 79 Nelson Road, Whitstable, Kent CT5 1DX

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This is a privately owned, not for profit fostering service that has been in operation since 1997. The service currently has 70 children placed in 53 fostering households. It provides a range of fostering placements for children from birth to 18 years. In addition, 'staying put' arrangements are in place for young people to remain with carers beyond their 18th birthday.

The manager registered with Ofsted on 18 August 2020.

Inspection dates: 19 to 23 February 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The independent fostering agency provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the independent fostering agency contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of last inspection: 11 February 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection:

On 22 December 2021, an announced monitoring visit took place. A compliance notice was served. A subsequent monitoring visit in February 2022 deemed the compliance notice issued in December 2021 had been met.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children make excellent progress as a direct result of the wraparound care provided by their foster carers and the agency support. Foster carers have all the qualities needed to make a real difference to a child's life, through their commitment, resilience and understanding.

The relationships between children and their foster carers are built on trust, empathy and kindness and a belief that children can achieve well in life. One child said, 'They say there is no perfect match. Well, this is it.' Another child said their foster carer 'does not allow me to limit myself. The opportunities have made me who I am, they have energised me.'

Disabled children flourish in the care of knowledgeable and experienced foster carers, enabling them to live their lives to the full. Children have wonderful experiences, such as going boating, tobogganing and having breakfast with Santa.

Foster carers benefit from the insight and guidance of their supervising social worker, who has specialist knowledge and ensures that they feel empowered to deliver high-quality care. Peer learning at regular carer support groups focuses on the issues specifically affecting their children, for example issues impacting on children with disabilities.

Foster carers have an astute understanding of children's communication and act as their voice when children are non-verbal or use alternative communication tools. On one occasion, a foster carer's interpretation ensured early intervention when the child's health deteriorated. One professional said, 'They go beyond the extra mile. They are parents to the child in the truest sense of the word.'

There is an inclusive culture at this agency, which also exists in the homes where children live. Foster carers engage children in conversations around subjects such as gender and sexuality, while creating safe spaces for them to discuss their views and ask questions.

Foster carers understand how to support children to explore and preserve their cultural heritage and they are open to learning. For example, one fostering family requested bespoke training so that they could better understand the children's Zimbabwean heritage, as it was different from their own.

Creating stability for children is a strength and a primary focus at this agency. A considerable proportion of children remain with their carers under 'staying put' arrangements. Foster carers are committed to providing a secure base for children so that they can pursue further education, employment or travel.

Children are supported to develop their independence, in a way appropriate to their age and stage of development. One child is travelling abroad for a work placement, while another has acquired a place at a prestigious university. Children described wanting to return 'home' to their foster carers.

All staff and foster carers fully understand the importance of listening carefully and responding to children's views and feelings. Committed foster carers understand the important role that they play in encouraging the child to reflect on and understand their history. All foster carers actively support children spending time with their family and friends, including for one child who wishes to stay closer to home and rekindle relationships with their birth family.

Excellent partnership working and effective communication by the agency have achieved stability and consistency for children. The registered manager and staff advocate for children relentlessly, to ensure that they are receiving a high standard of care from other agencies involved in their care planning.

Children's achievements are recognised and celebrated. An annual awards ceremony is attended by foster carers and children. Children spoke fondly and with pride about their awards, which include 'outstanding progress in education' and 'being kind to others'.

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

A commitment to safeguarding is threaded throughout this agency. Children are appropriately safeguarded by consistently reliable foster carers and said that they feel safe. The trusting relationships between children and their foster carers provide a platform for honest and transparent discussions.

Dedicated foster carers do not avoid difficult situations or conversations; they support children to take age-appropriate risks and explore the world safely. This has encouraged one child to distance themselves from unsafe people and environments, which has significantly improved their health and well-being.

All staff and foster carers have completed mandatory and bespoke training, for example, in child sexual exploitation. Therapeutic intervention complements the training. Specific training and workshops are delivered to care leavers and children. This provides a comfortable and safe space for children to speak about their experiences and to learn from each other, to reduce risk-taking behaviour.

Excellent relationship-based interventions have a positive impact on children's experiences. Targeted work by a specialist practitioner enhances the care provided by foster carers. For one child, this resulted in a disclosure that led to conviction of the perpetrator.

Enthusiastic foster carers and staff strive to consistently increase their knowledge. New foster carers in particular embrace the opportunity to educate themselves further. All learning is confidently embedded in practice. This is a continued focus of the agency and supports its approach to keeping children safe.

When foster carers do not meet the high standard of care expected, the registered manager is vigorous in her approach to eliminate negative impact on children. Concerns are managed efficiently and thoroughly. Foster carers are challenged appropriately, and records reflect learning and outcomes.

The senior leadership team prioritises staff learning and reflection. Practice forums provide space where staff learn through practice-based evidence and are kept informed by up-to-date research in practice. The introduction of risk-reduction meetings offers regular management oversight of safeguarding and placement stability. As a result, early indication of placement breakdown or foster carer fatigue have been identified and addressed swiftly.

Safer recruitment of all staff is thorough. Meticulous checks are made, both in this country and overseas if required. Interview questions are appropriate to the position and in keeping with the agency's ethos.

The registered manager is diligent when reporting significant incidents to the regulator. However, to further strengthen the process, the system would benefit from guidance to staff on what to do when a notifiable event arises at the weekend. Communication with the local authority designated officer indicates strong risk assessments are in place which inform prompt and responsive action to allegation management.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The compassionate, methodical and pragmatic registered manager provides strong leadership across the organisation. Exceptional support provided by an experienced and knowledgeable administration manager enables detailed oversight of the agency.

To support her in striving for excellence, the registered manager has a passionate and conscientious staff team. Senior leaders are visible, proactive and determined to maintain the agency's outstanding practice in their commitment to children in their care.

There are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the service. Productive and informed management meetings include the monitoring and quality assurance of all records kept by the service. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised. This means that senior leaders assure compliance across the agency.

All staff receive regular practice-related supervision. The use of a dynamic appraisal form enables effective tracking of targets and the progress of staff development.

Senior leaders recognise and reward staff commitment to learning, the agency and children. As a result, the agency has a permanent, well-established team of people who know the foster carers and children incredibly well.

The fostering panel consists of appropriately qualified and experienced members who are equipped to make competent recommendations, considering the nature of the children and carers the agency supports. All panel members have received an annual appraisal and completed all mandatory training.

The responsible individual, in her role as agency decision-maker, offers clarity and scrutiny to decision-making. Decision-making is timely and well informed, and appropriate recommendations are in line with the overriding objective to promote the welfare of children in the agency's care.

The registered manager completes her own quality of care review. The ability and tenacity of the senior leadership team to continually scrutinise their own practice are admirable. This enables effective learning and provides clarity to further improve and develop the service.

All requirements set at the last inspection have been met.

What does the independent fostering agency need to do to improve?

Recommendation

- The registered person should have a system in place to notify, within 24 hours, persons and appropriate authorities of the occurrence of significant events, in accordance with regulation 36. In particular, the system should include what to do when a notifiable event arises at the weekend. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 29.1)

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: SC036530

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Inspectors

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