

Flying Colours Foster Care

Flying Colours Foster Care Limited

Park View Business Centre, Combermere, Whitchurch, Shropshire SY13 4AL

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

A small private company operates this fostering agency. The foster carers, who live in England and Wales, provide long-term and short-term care. At the time of this inspection, the fostering agency was providing placements for eight children, living in seven fostering households.

Because the agency is delivering services to foster carers who live in England and Wales, they are required to register with both country's regulatory bodies. However, they are not registered with the Care Inspectorate Wales. Ofsted have made Care Inspectorate Wales aware of this information.

Inspection dates: 14 to 18 October 2024

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and/or the care and experiences of children and young people are poor, and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 5 October 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Shortfalls in how children are helped and protected and weaknesses in leadership and management are reflected in children's experiences and impact on their progress, and contribute to the inadequate judgement.

When children's needs can no longer be met by their foster carers, there is a lack of swift escalation by managers to the child's placing authority. The agency has given notice on some children's placements without decisions being made as part of the child's care planning process. There is no evidence of attempts being made to stabilise children's placements with their foster carers in advance of this decision. In addition, when children move on sooner than anticipated, there is a lack of reflection by managers, staff and foster carers to identify learning to inform future practice about how best to support children during difficult periods.

Most children have been living with their foster carers for several years and placement stability is generally good. However, when some children come to live with their foster carers it is not clear how managers have considered whether foster carers have the skills and experience to meet the children's needs or what impact there may be on children already living in the foster home. This shortfall undermines placement stability for some children.

Children said that they feel happy about where they live and the care that they receive. They develop positive relationships with their foster carers and most make good progress. Foster carers are sensitive to children's emotions and help them to settle into their new homes. Children have the opportunity to meet their foster carers before they move in. One child with complex health needs has made excellent progress with their social skills, speech and comprehension.

Children are supported to attend school and make progress with their education. Children enjoy school and take part in after-school sports and activities which help them to develop new interests and make friends. Foster carers provide emotional support when children move to a new school, and this helps them to settle in quickly. Agency staff attend education meetings alongside foster carers, however, they do not always receive records of the meetings. This has not been identified or escalated.

Children enjoy a range of positive experiences in being part of their foster family. One child attended a family wedding and several children have enjoyed holidays abroad. Foster carers listen to children's views and support them to develop their own interests and gain a sense of identity. Children enjoy going to sports clubs, on theatre trips, watching films and going to soft play areas. They are encouraged in a supportive way to try new experiences, which develops their confidence.

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

Managers do not recognise the seriousness of some children's vulnerabilities or that foster carers need clear strategies to help them to manage these and keep children safe. Not all children have a plan to help their foster carers know how to care for them safely, which leaves children vulnerable to harm.

Children who go missing from home do not always receive appropriate responses or support to reduce the risk of reoccurrence. Managers do not provide clear and up-to-date guidance for foster carers to follow. They do not always recognise that children may be at risk when they are missing. In addition, managers have not always taken appropriate follow-up action to ensure that children receive return home interviews or that foster carers receive additional support. As a result, there are missed opportunities to understand why children go missing and what happened while they were away.

Four children have moved on sooner than anticipated because carers have been unable to meet their increasingly complex needs. Not all foster carers receive training on aspects of safeguarding, including behaviour management. Managers place trust in foster carers to know how to respond to children's needs, without recognising that the agency needs to provide them with support and knowledge to help them to understand and meet children's needs and keep them safe.

Managers do not have effective oversight of serious incidents. Recording is poor and it is difficult to ascertain how many incidents have occurred. There were some concerning incidents in foster carers' records that had not been recognised as such or addressed. On several occasions, serious incidents had not been notified to the relevant authorities. As a result of poor oversight, managers are not always taking prompt action to promote children's safety.

Foster carers do not receive training on how to administer medication safely. In addition, foster carers are responsible for arranging their own first-aid training. This training is not monitored by managers, so they are unable to assure themselves that carers have completed this essential training. When foster carers care for children with complex health needs, managers do not assure themselves that foster carers have received and understood the specialist training from health professionals. There is no record of what training carers have undertaken. This means that carers may be providing complex care without being competent, which may leave children at risk of harm.

Managers fail to ensure that safer recruitment checks are carried out on new staff and panel members. This was identified as a shortfall at the previous inspection, but no action has been taken to obtain the missing checks. Two new members of staff have been employed since the last inspection without the required checks. This means that the agency cannot satisfy themselves that their employees are safe to work with children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Leadership and management of this agency are weak. Leaders have failed to demonstrate that they are managing the agency with competence and skill and with a focus on safeguarding children.

The responsible individual has limited involvement with the running of the agency and has placed her trust in the manager to be doing what is needed, without sufficient oversight and supervision. The manager has failed to demonstrate that he has the necessary skills and qualifications for the role. Despite being the manager for several years, he has failed to complete the required management qualification. This has been raised as a shortfall at the last two inspections, but no action has been taken to address this.

The agency decision-maker has recently resigned. No action has been taken to recruit someone new to this role. Without a decision-maker, the agency is unable to function effectively if a decision is needed about a foster carer's suitability or their continued approval.

Ineffective monitoring by leaders means that a range of shortfalls have not been identified and addressed. Shortfalls include gaps in carer training and missing documentation relating to children. It is also unclear whether foster carers are receiving regular supervision and how often supervising social workers see children. When challenging incidents and concerning events occur, it is not always clear that these are followed up as needed. Records of professional discussions are not always kept, making it difficult to establish the quality of multi-agency working to support foster carers and children. In addition, managers do not consult with all relevant people to inform their review of the quality of care that children receive and to help shape the development of the service.

There are several shortfalls in the functioning of the agency's fostering panel. The manager has acted as a panel member on occasions when he has been involved in the matter being presented to panel for consideration. Managers show a lack of understanding about this conflict of interest, which had previously been raised by panel members. In addition, no vice-chair has been appointed to panel to provide cover in the event the panel chair is not available.

Panel members and the panel chair have not received an annual appraisal of their work. Managers have failed to identify this shortfall or take action to address it. Panel members do not have the opportunity to receive training at least annually. This limits their development and understanding of what is happening in the agency and for children and carers.

Managers do not ensure that all foster carers have an annual review, and they are unclear about regulatory expectations. When reviews are held and an agency decision-maker has been in post, foster carers have not always been informed of the outcome of their review in a timely way.

The agency's statement of purpose is not kept under review and updated when needed. This was raised at the previous inspection but has not been addressed. The statement of purpose contains old and inaccurate information about the agency's address and the staff employed. In addition, the range of fostering placements described does not accurately represent what the agency is providing.

Not all staff receive regular good-quality supervision. Records of staff supervision are kept but suggest that discussions are very basic and do not include reference to staff practice or development. The responsible individual supervises the manager but there is a lack of reflective discussion and no focus on management of the agency. The manager and staff have not had an annual appraisal of their work.

Staff do not receive regular good-quality training to support their practice and development. There are no expectations for what training should be completed and revisited over time. This limits staff's opportunities to continually develop their practice and understanding about how best to support the children and their carers.

Foster carers feel supported and value the small, family feel of the agency. Although feedback was mainly positive, some foster carers recognised a deterioration in the work of the agency over recent years, particularly in the standard of documents and the lack of development of new foster carers.

What does the independent fostering agency 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 Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The fostering service provider must—</p> <p>keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the statement of purpose and children’s guide, and</p> <p>notify the Chief Inspector of any such revision within 28 days. (Regulation 4(a)(b)(c))</p> <p>This requirement is repeated.</p>	31 January 2025
<p>A person is not fit to manage a fostering agency unless that person—</p> <p>having regard to the size of the fostering agency, its statement of purpose, and the numbers and needs of the children placed by it—</p> <p>has the qualifications, skills and experience necessary for managing the fostering agency. (Regulation 7 (2)(b)(i))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the registered manager having the recognised management qualification and skills to manage the fostering agency.</p> <p>This requirement is repeated.</p>	15 December 2024
<p>*The fostering service provider must provide foster parents with such training, advice, information and support, including support outside office hours, as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them.</p> <p>The fostering service provider must take all reasonable steps to ensure that foster parents are familiar with, and act in accordance with the policies established in accordance with regulations 12(1) and 13(1) and (3).</p>	15 December 2024

The fostering service provider must ensure that, in relation to any child placed or to be placed with a foster parent, the foster parent is given such information, which is kept up to date, as to enable him to provide appropriate care for the child, and in particular that each foster parent is provided with a copy of the most recent version of the child's care plan provided to the fostering service provider under regulation 6(3)(d) of the Care Planning Regulations. (Regulation 17 (1) (2) (3))

This requirement is repeated.

*The fostering service provider must not—

employ a person to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so, or

allow a person to whom paragraph (2) applies, to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so.

This paragraph applies to any person who is employed, other than by the fostering service provider, in a position in which that person may in the course of their duties have regular contact with children placed by the fostering service.

For the purposes of paragraph (1), a person is not fit to work for the purposes of a fostering service unless that person—

is of integrity and good character,

has the qualifications, skills and experience necessary for the work they are to perform,

is physically and mentally fit for the work they are to perform,

and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to that person in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 1.

The fostering service provider must take reasonable steps to ensure that any person working for a fostering service who is not employed by the fostering service, and to whom paragraph (2) does not apply, is appropriately supervised while carrying out their duties.

(Regulation 20 (1)(a)(b) (2) (3)(a)(b)(c) (4))

15 December 2024

<p>This requirement is repeated.</p>	
<p>The fostering service provider must review the approval of each foster parent in accordance with this regulation.</p> <p>A review must take place not more than a year after approval, and thereafter whenever the fostering service provider consider it necessary, but at intervals of not more than a year. (Regulation 28 (1) (2))</p> <p>This requirement is repeated.</p>	<p>31 January 2025</p>
<p>The registered person must maintain a system for—</p> <p>monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals, and</p> <p>improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency.</p> <p>The registered person must provide the Chief Inspector with a written report in respect of any review conducted for the purposes of paragraph (1) and, on request, to any local authority.</p> <p>The system referred to in paragraph (1) must provide for consultation with foster parents, children placed with foster parents, and their placing authority (unless, in the case of a fostering agency which is a voluntary organisation, it is also the placing authority)</p> <p>(The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 Regulation 35(1)(a)(b)(2)(3)</p> <p>This specifically relates to having effective monitoring systems in place. It also relates to completing a monitoring report at regular intervals and sharing this with Ofsted. It also relates to ensuring that the monitoring report contains consultation from stakeholders.</p> <p>This requirement is repeated.</p>	<p>31 January 2025</p>
<p>*The registered provider and the registered manager must, having regard to—</p> <p>the size of the fostering agency, its statement of purpose, and the numbers and needs of the children placed by the fostering agency, and</p>	<p>15 December 2024</p>

<p>the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children placed by the fostering agency,</p> <p>carry on or manage the fostering agency (as the case may be) with sufficient care, competence and skill.</p> <p>The registered provider must ensure that—</p> <p>where the registered provider is an organisation, the responsible individual,</p> <p>undertakes, from time to time, such training as is appropriate to ensure that they have the experience and skills necessary for carrying on the fostering agency.</p> <p>The registered manager must undertake from time to time such training as is appropriate to ensure that they have the experience and skills necessary for managing the fostering agency. (Regulation 8 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b) (3))</p> <p>This specifically relates to leaders and managers understanding their roles and carrying them out effectively.</p>	
<p>The fostering service provider must ensure that all persons employed by them—</p> <p>receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal, and</p> <p>are enabled from to time to time to obtain further qualifications appropriate to the work they perform. (Regulation 21 (4)(a)(b))</p>	31 January 2025
<p>Subject to paragraph (5), the fostering service provider must constitute one or more fostering panels, as necessary, to perform the functions of a fostering panel under these Regulations, and must appoint panel members including—</p> <p>one or two persons who may act as chair if the person appointed to chair the panel is absent or that office is vacant ("the vice chairs")</p> <p>The fostering service provider must ensure that the fostering panel has sufficient members, and that individual members have between them the experience and expertise necessary, to effectively discharge the functions of the panel.</p> <p>A fostering panel may be constituted jointly by any two or more fostering service providers, in which case the</p>	31 January 2025

<p>appointment of members must be made by agreement between the fostering service providers. (Regulation 23 (4)(ii) (5) (7))</p>	
<p>A fostering service provider must, in deciding whether to approve X as a foster parent and as to the terms of any approval, take into account the recommendation of the fostering panel.</p> <p>No member of the fostering panel may take part in any decision made by a fostering service provider under paragraph (3). (Regulation 27 (3) (4))</p>	<p>31 January 2025</p>
<p>The registered person in respect of an independent fostering agency must ensure that—</p> <p>the welfare of children placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarded and promoted at all times, and</p> <p>before making any decision affecting a child placed or to be placed with a foster parent due consideration is given to the child’s—</p> <p>wishes and feelings (having regard to the child’s age and understanding. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(i))</p>	<p>31 January 2025</p>

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that the fostering service appoints a decision maker and this is a senior person within the fostering service or is a trustee or director of the fostering service who is a social worker with at least three years post-qualifying experience in childcare social work and has knowledge of childcare law and practice. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 23.12)

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: SC440078

Registered provider: Flying Colours Foster Care Limited

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Inspectors

Vicky Smith, Social Care Inspector

Alison Snell, Social Care Inspector

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