

# 2720522

Registered provider: Utopia Childcare Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

The home is owned 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, two children were living in the home. Both were present and spoke with the inspector.

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

### Inspection dates: 6 and 7 January 2025

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 26 October 2023

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/10/2023	Full	Good

## Inspection judgements

### Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children benefit from well-planned moves into the home, with a children's guide and video shared with them before they move in. One child remembers a visit with the registered manager very well and said that this made them feel at ease before moving into the home. Children are positive about their experiences in the home and have good relationships with staff. Positive, stable relationships help children to feel secure and cared for.

When children move out of the home, they are prepared both practically and emotionally. One child has moved out of the home since the last inspection, due to an increase in risks and staff shortages. The move was managed in a sensitive manner and the child moved to a home that was more suited to their needs.

Children make progress in all aspects of their lives. There has been a reduction in behavioural incidents and risk-taking behaviour. Children make progress in education and with their social and independence skills. Children enjoy new activities, such as ice hockey, swimming and boxing. Growing independence and actively participating in various activities further develops children's skills and self-confidence. Children's overall welfare is safeguarded and they are being prepared for their futures.

Staff help children to explore their identity. Children are encouraged and supported to understand who they are and where they come from. One child is being supported to understand their heritage through a genealogy test and to maintain their familial relationships. Staff recognise the importance of identity and children are encouraged to explore their characteristics such as their gender, sexual orientation, religion and assessed needs, which gives children a greater sense of self.

Communication with children is effective. Children benefit from being heard. Listening to and raising children's voices in creative ways is a real strength in the home. Staff support children to share their life experiences, which has resulted in them receiving assistance from services suited to their needs.

Children are able to have a say in a structured manner. For example, children lead their own meetings and discuss difficulties they have. This results in children's social relationships improving, and fewer incidents in the home.

The appearance of the home reflects a commitment to creating a nurturing and engaging environment for children. Attention to detail in both the internal and external decor enhances the home's appeal. Communal and recreational spaces support positive activities and interactions between the children. The warm atmosphere in the home is contributed to by the display of photos of the children and activities they have taken part in during their time in the home. The environment supports the home's care objectives and enhances the quality of life for children.

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

Staff have the knowledge, skills and experience to ensure the best quality of care for the children. They complete mandatory training and additional training necessary to meet the needs of the children. Staff understand the impact of adverse childhood experiences and trauma. This enables them to be empathetic to children's emotions rather than focusing on the resulting behaviours.

When children go missing from home, staff quickly respond and follow protocols to try and get children back to the home safely. When needed, staff report children missing to the relevant authorities and offer support on their return. However, records of incidents are not always clear.

The number of incidents of children going missing from home has reduced significantly. Before moving into the home, one child had a very high number of missing-from-home episodes. There have been no such episodes in several months after targeted intervention by staff and other services. Staff have been effective in their approach and have maintained effective boundaries. Children understand the necessity of boundaries and recognise that following them has improved other areas of their lives.

Staff focus on ensuring the safety and well-being of children, while minimising physical interventions. There have been two instances of the use of restraint, with one taking place during the inspection to keep a child safe, where staff used their skills to attempt alternative strategies. The record of the other intervention was not accurate and was not signed by the staff involved. This was addressed by the manager during a supervision.

When children raise concerns, these are taken seriously and investigated thoroughly. Managers keep children informed of investigations and their outcomes. Learning is identified and, on one occasion, mediation took place between a child and a member of staff to repair their relationship, which was beneficial. Managers support children and staff when there may be difficulties in relationships and enable children to be heard.

There have been several external complaints from neighbours. Records are clear and set out the efforts made by the manager to find a resolution and reduce the impact on children.

Safeguarding concerns are acted on without delay and action is taken to keep children safe. The manager advocates on behalf of children to ensure that while they are being kept safe, strategies to do so are proportionate and consider the age and any restrictions the child is subject to.

Safeguarding notifications to Ofsted have been submitted late and lack clarity. On one occasion, the notification was four weeks late. This was due to a lack of understanding by the manager. Steps have been taken to improve this. The delay in sharing significant information reduces the regulator's and professionals' understanding of the safety and quality of care in the home. This weakens the overall oversight of children's safety.

## **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

Since the last inspection, there have been changes in the management team. The manager is suitably skilled and qualified and is working towards the relevant qualification in leadership and management. She is new to the management role but is supported by an experienced responsible individual and deputy manager.

The manager is an effective leader and manager of the home. She demonstrates a good understanding of the home, the staff and the children. The manager is passionate about supporting the children to achieve positive outcomes. She demonstrates a good understanding of how to support the care team to develop and grow. She can identify the strengths and weaknesses of the home and is willing to take on board feedback to learn and achieve better outcomes.

The staff team has also experienced significant change. A number of staff left the organisation for various reasons. Since being in post, the manager has established a strong and reliable team, who work well together and have a range of knowledge and expertise. The home does not use agency workers. The manager has high expectations of herself and the team, which has driven forward progress.

The staff team is diverse and represents the diversity in the children they care for. It is beneficial for children to experience representation among those who care for them and to be able to build on their identity and explore what identity means to them in their home and in a wider context.

The manager is a good advocate for children, which has brought about change in all areas of their lives. One child did not have an allocated social worker for a significant period of time. This resulted in gaps in their care planning. The manager continuously raised this as a concern with the placing authority, directly with team managers and in care planning meetings. This resulted in action being taken and the child being allocated a social worker.

The electronic recording system in the home is challenging. It frequently crashes and there are some issues when linking together documents for incidents. This makes recording events in children's lives challenging and frustrating for staff. It also affects staff's understanding of risk assessments, if they are potentially incorrect. To combat this, the manager keeps paper records of children's plans. The manager and the responsible individual have raised their concerns with the technical teams and directors of the organisation.

The statement of purpose requires a thorough review. There is reference to the home working with children with a learning disability, which is not a condition of the home's registration.

## What does the children’s home 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 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
<p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p> <p>a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to,</p> <p>sexual exploitation;</p> <p>an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious;</p> <p>there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there;</p> <p>a child protection enquiry involving a child —</p> <p>is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or</p> <p>there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that significant events and incidents are reported to the regulator within required timescales.</p>	<p>5 February 2025</p>
<p>The registered person must—</p> <p>keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it. (Regulation 16 (3)(a))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that the statement of purpose reflects the registration requirements of the home.</p>	<p>5 February 2025</p>

## **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:** 2720522

**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:** Yazmine Hinds

## Inspector

Tonia Dubidat, Social Care Inspector

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