

# Ivy House Fostering Agency

Ivy House Fostering Agency Limited

Middletons Yard, 24/25 Potter Street, Worksop, Nottinghamshire, S80 2FT

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

Ivy House is an independent fostering agency. It provides a range of foster placements, including short-term, long-term, bridging, parent and child and respite placements. At the time of this inspection, the agency had 30 fostering households and 51 children placed.

The manager registered with Ofsted in 2020.

Children and foster carers were spoken to during this inspection.

### Inspection dates: 28 October to 1 November 2024

**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 independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 16 August 2021

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Inspection judgements

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

Children are receiving very good care from experienced and skilled foster carers. Their dedication, kindness and compassion enable children to build trusted relationships and develop a strong sense of security. There is a strong commitment to permanence. Many children remain with carers post eighteen as they are part of the family. Carers enable children to develop their personalities and accept them for who they are. They describe children as 'fantastic' and celebrate their achievements. Children are active, have healthy diets and take pride in their appearance. As a result, children thrive and develop good levels of self-confidence.

Everyone who works for the agency has a good understanding of children's lived experiences. This is transferred into individualised care plans. Brothers and sisters are often placed together. This is particularly important for children's identity and feelings of security. Children maintain their heritage through their diet, learning about their religion and language. Children with disabilities have access to activities and specialist resources to meet their needs which helps them to feel valued.

Foster carers have strong relationships with the managers, social workers, parents and other professionals. They are fully included in the team around the child. Foster carers receive appropriate training and development to meet children's needs. They have total confidence in the managers and feel valued and respected. There is always someone at the end of the phone to help. As a result, children's care remains consistent and responsive.

The managers and social workers ensure that children make progress in all areas of their lives. Children attend school and achieve academically. One child is currently taking 'A' levels with a view to going to university. Carers take children to and from school to ensure they are safe. Children attend health appointments and have regular medical reviews. One carer was supported to care for a child with complex health needs. The outcomes for this child have been excellent.

Foster carers have good support care arrangements which means that children spend time with named carers for sleep overs and holidays. This has the feel of an extended family. Children look forward to these experiences. This helps to sustain placements. Very few children leave their carers in unexpected circumstances. Where this has happened, the agency has successfully moved children to other carers within the agency. This has enabled children to keep familiar people around them and minimises the impact of having to move.

Foster carers are not always recording information about children in a helpful way. The quality of foster carers logs is variable. The managers recognise this and are considering how to make improvements.

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

The managers and social workers work very hard to keep children safe. They have a very good understanding of children's risks and vulnerabilities. The managers are meticulous about managing risk and have measures in place to mitigate those risks. These measures are not always fully captured in children's safe care plans. This could cause confusion about the strategies that carers are expected to implement to keep children safe.

Managers have built a strong safeguarding culture where children are regularly seen alone and know all the staff well. This builds trust and opportunities for children to share any concerns about their care. The agency responds well to concerns raised by or about children. There are good examples where timely responses by foster carers and staff have kept children safe. Managers spend considerable time with foster carers to make sure they understand concerns and risks. This builds carers' confidence in managing difficult situations. Managers and staff respond to carers when they call for help. This prevents situations from escalating and occurring again.

Social work staff monitor children closely when new concerns emerge. They work effectively with other agencies to ensure there is a proportionate risk management plan in place. The managers request regular meetings with local authority social workers to ensure children have the right level of oversight to keep them as safe. Foster carers are challenged sensitively and skilfully if changes are required to manage risks.

Children do not go missing from home. When children are late home or say they are not coming back carers respond quickly and sensitively. This helps children feel comfortable to return home where they are warmly welcomed. The agency therapist is supporting carers with approaches to this which are proving to be effective. The agency is alert to contextual safeguarding risks. There are processes in place should children go missing.

Social work staff and foster carers are recruited safely through appropriate vetting processes. This means that children are cared for by suitable people. There have been very few concerns raised about foster carers. When this has happened there is a timely response which means that situations do not drift and impact on children.

Managers have not informed Ofsted of two incidents as required under regulation 36. This minimises opportunities for the regulator to have oversight of serious incidents involving children. Managers have accepted this and understand why they need to notify Ofsted.

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

The registered manager works closely with her co-directors. They share the same level of passion and commitment and work relentlessly to ensure high standards of care for children. The energy and time they afford children and carers is commendable. They have high aspirations for children which they do not

compromise on. Children know the managers very well and enjoy spending time with them.

The agency has grown considerably since the last inspection. The managers have continued to provide close oversight through the period of growth. This has impacted on their capacity to develop effective systems to monitor the care provided in a much larger agency.

Social work staff benefit from regular reflective supervision and case direction from managers. This helps them to keep children at the centre of their work and make well informed decisions. Staff receive relevant training to inform their support of foster carers and children. Managers model a high level of professionalism and integrity which is now developing in the social work team. The team works closely together in a supportive way.

Leaders and managers have positive working relationships with a range of professionals to implement children's care plans. They are influential in decision making about children and have the confidence to challenge poor practice where necessary. There is an effective fostering panel led by an experienced chair. They apply appropriate scrutiny and rigour to reach recommendations which help the agency to keep children safe.

The manager recruits foster carers carefully and they receive a thorough assessment. Currently most carers are White British. The agency looks after children from diverse backgrounds and there is limited placement choice for children from ethnic minorities.

## 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, Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>If any of the events in column 1 of the table in Schedule 7 takes place in relation to a fostering agency, the registered person must without delay notify the persons or bodies indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table.</p> <p>Any notification made in accordance with this regulation which is given orally must be confirmed in writing.</p> <p>This specifically relates to informing Ofsted of events listed under Schedule 7 where required to do so.</p> <p>(Reg 36 (1)(2))</p>	<p>06 December 2024</p>

### Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. Children are actively encouraged to read their files, other than necessarily confidential or third party information, and to correct errors and add personal statements. (Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards, page 43, paragraph 26.6).
- The registered person should implement an effective strategy to ensure sufficient foster carers to be responsive to current and predicted future demands on the service. Future planning should include increasing diversity of carers. (Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards, page 28, paragraph 13.1).
- The registered person should ensure that safe care plans reflect how children's safety and welfare is promoted in all fostering placements. (Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards, page 14, paragraph 4.1).
- The registered person should ensure that there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the service to ensure the ongoing quality of the service.(Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards, page 50, paragraph 25.1)

## **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:** 2553271

**Registered provider:** Ivy House Fostering Agency Ltd

**Registered provider address:** Middletons Yard, 24/25 Potter Street, Worksop, Nottinghamshire S80 2FT

**Responsible individual:** Joanne Nutton

**Registered manager:** Carol Stickland

**Telephone number:** 01909 768318

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## **Inspector**

Laura Walker, social care inspector

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