

# Kasper

Inspection report for independent fostering agency

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<b>Inspector</b>	Alex Turner
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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	16 October 2006

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## About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

## The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

## **Service information**

### **Brief description of the service**

Incorporated in March 1997 Kasper Fostering provides a wide range of fostering opportunities for young persons from birth to 18 years. The agency is staffed and managed by a team of qualified and experienced professionals. The service currently operates from a main office in Whitstable, Kent and has approved and supports foster carers across the county and in South East London.

### **Summary**

At this announced full inspection, all key standards were inspected. This is an outstanding service. Excellent practice is evident in all aspects of the operation and across each of the outcome headings.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

This was the first inspection of the service by Ofsted. The previous inspection was completed by the Commission for Social Care Inspection in October 2006. At that time no requirements were made however it is clear the service has continued to develop and further enhanced practice.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

The fostering service promotes the health and development of children and young people. The service ensures children and young people receive health care which meets their needs for physical, emotional and social development. For instance, the service provides funding in order that children receive services which they would not have access to otherwise for example speech therapy, specialist nursery placements and anger management. To help convey and obtain information about health, interpreters and alternative forms of communication have been used where it has been helpful to do so. Health Plans and associated records are audited. Information gathered has been used to evaluate practice and help plan subsequent initiatives.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is outstanding.

The persons carrying on and managing the service are suitable to do so. The fostering service makes available foster carers who provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment. The service inspects all foster homes at least once a year and carries out unannounced visits to make sure that they meet the needs of foster children. Each child or young person has their own bed and accommodation to reflect their needs for privacy and space or for any specific need resulting from a disability. Foster carers' preparation and training cover health and safety issues and carers are provided with written guidelines on their health and safety responsibilities. Where foster carers provide transport for children and young people, the fostering service ensures this is safe and appropriate to their needs. The fostering service seeks to ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her/his assessed needs. Matching reports and risks assessments are completed on all

new placements. Where it has been practicable to do so, the opportunity for a period of introduction has been provided before moving in. Placement decisions consider the child's assessed racial, ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic needs and match these as closely as possible with the ethnic origin, race, religion, culture and language of the foster family. The majority of carers that completed pre-inspection surveys rated the quality of information received prior to placements being made as outstanding or good. The stability of placements indicates the matching process to be effective. The fostering service protects young people from abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation. Stakeholders that have conveyed views about the service have made positive comments in relation to this area of practice. Young people state that they know who to speak to if they are not happy, have a personal problem or would like to make a complaint. Safe caring guidelines are developed by each foster home. Safe caring guidelines are complimented and enhanced by individualised risk assessment and risk management strategies. The service makes an excellent contribution to safeguarding the welfare and safety of young people. The fostering service ensures that the people it employs are suitable to work with children. The selection and recruitment process is rigorous. All required checks are carried out and updated as and when it is necessary to do so. Administration of the process is excellent. The fostering panel is organised efficiently and effectively. The panel has carried out its functions with diligence and maintains high professional standards. The panel is constituted wholly in line with the regulations and standards. Panel membership is diverse and includes people with expertise in fostering, child health, education and law.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

The fostering service ensures that children and young people are provided with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality. Practice is grounded on a clear Equal Opportunities policy which covers all aspects of the service's operation. Relevant training is provided to all foster carers and staff. Themed training is provided for foster carers looking after unaccompanied minors and asylum seeking children. There is a specialist social worker for children with disabilities who promotes good practice in this area for example by checking on home environments, supervising foster carers and liaising with relevant community teams. The service development plan and action involves recruiting more foster carers, sessional staff and independent social workers from a wide ethnic, cultural and religious group. The fostering service gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of children and young people all of whom benefit from attendance at school, college or purposeful employment. There are close working links with education providers. Staff and foster carers attend meetings regarding education plans and liaise regularly with school. Children are provided with much encouragement and support; their achievements are acknowledged and celebrated. Foster carers routinely attend school events for example parents evenings, school plays and sports days. The service provides an education room and organises tuition where benefits in doing so have been identified. The training programme for foster carers covers the education of children in their care. The focus upon continuous improvement and learning is evident throughout the organisation and has been favourably commented upon in other independent reports.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

Arrangements for contact are included in placement plans. There is a well-equipped, family-oriented, contact centre where children and their families can meet, and their families

(or social workers) can stay, when needed. The service has trained contact supervisors to aid the contact process and produce high quality records. Foster carers and staff transport children/young people to contact meetings wherever this may need to take place. Training on promoting contact is included in that which is provided. The fostering service ensures that children's opinions, and those of their families and significant others are sought over all issues which are likely to affect their daily life and their future. Foster carers understand the importance of listening to the views of the children in their care, and are trained and supported in doing so. Placement stability has been promoted by listening to and acting on the views and wishes of children. Suitable means are provided for any child or young person with communication difficulties to make their wishes and feelings known regarding their care and treatment. Children and young people know how to raise concerns or complaints.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is outstanding.

The fostering service ensures that their foster care services help young people to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living. There are clear written requirements of what is expected of foster carers in terms of preparing young people for independent or semi-independent living. Foster carers receive training and support to enable them to provide effective support and guidance to a young person preparing to move into independent or semi independent living. The fostering service ensures that each young person preparing to move to independent or semi-independent living is consulted about her/his future and encouraged to be actively involved in decision making processes and implementation of the Pathway Plan. Young people who leave the service at 18 are given a financial grant and, where possible, provided with continued support into adulthood.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives. The children's guide to the fostering service is suitable for all children fostered through the service, includes a summary of what the service sets out to do for children, and is provided to children as soon as they are fostered, and to all foster carers. When necessary, the guide is produced in different formats to meet the needs of different groups of children. The children's guide contains information on how a child can secure access to an independent advocate and about how to complain. Children and young people benefit from a service that constantly strives to develop and improve by self evaluation, external audit and reflection on practice. Careful consideration is paid to recommendations made and lesson learned, which are capitalised on and incorporated into practice. The organisation and management of staff is excellent. One placing authority provided the following comment which sums up the broad consensus of feedback received from other stakeholders in the service, "Maximum utilisation of professional skills and partnership in the best interests of the young person. The service is child sensitive and positive outcome orientated". Service development is being carefully implemented to help ensure these strengths are maintained and provide a solid foundation for future growth. The staff team is cohesive, highly skilled and committed. Their work is complimented by a core group of independent and sessional workers with proven competence in their field. Individuals from both groups of staff have been unanimous in the assessment of their employer which has been strongly positive. There is a clear strategy for working with carers that is documented and understood. This includes

arrangements for training and development, encouragement for self help groups, supervision, support services, information and advice, assistance in dealing with other relevant services, such as health and education, out-of-hours support, respite care and arrangements for reviews. The role of the supervising social worker is clear both to the worker and the carer. Annual review reports are prepared and are available to the Fostering Panel. There is a good system of communication between the fostering service social workers and the child’s social worker. Foster carers have been highly complimentary of the service. The following comment made by one carer sums up many of the good points noted by others, "I know all the Kasper staff personally and they all know the children we foster carers look after. It is like one big family and many of the children are like cousins to each other. Very rarely do placements break down and lots of our children know and meet together regularly. Any problems that arise are always dealt with quickly and efficiently. As far as I am concerned Kasper could not do anything better. They are in my opinion at the highest standard possible. They are the best at everything. Support is always available. I have fostered for Local Authorities and other agencies but Kasper 'knock spots' of both. Their standards are the highest possible. If anyone was looking to foster I would always recommend Kasper extremely highly." Appropriate records are kept and are accessible in relation to the fostering services and the individual foster carers and foster children.

**What must be done to secure future improvement?**

**Statutory requirements**

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Fostering Services Regulations 2005 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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**Recommendations**

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

## Annex

## Annex A

### National Minimum Standards for independent fostering agency

#### Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the fostering service promotes the health and development of children (NMS 12)

**Ofsted considers 12 the key standard to be inspected.**

#### Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- any persons carrying on or managing the service are suitable (NMS 3)
- the fostering service provides suitable foster carers (NMS 6)
- the service matches children to carers appropriately (NMS 8)
- the fostering service protects each child or young person from abuse and neglect (NMS 9)
- the people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people (NMS 15)
- fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively (NMS 30)

**Ofsted considers 3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected.**

#### Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the fostering service values diversity (NMS 7)
- the fostering service promotes educational achievement (NMS 13)
- when foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child (NMS 31)

**Ofsted considers 7, 13 and 31 the key standards to be inspected.**

#### Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the fostering service promotes contact arrangements for the child or young person (NMS 10)
- the fostering service promotes consultation (NMS 11)

**Ofsted considers 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected.**

#### Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the fostering service prepares young people for adulthood (NMS 14)
- the fostering service pays carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified (NMS 29)

**Ofsted considers none of the above to be key standards to be inspected.**

#### Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- there is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives (NMS 1)
- the fostering service is managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience (NMS 2)
- the fostering service is monitored and controlled as specified (NMS 4)

**Annex A**

- the fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently (NMS 5)
- staff are organised and managed effectively (NMS 16)
- the fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff (NMS 17)
- the fostering service is a fair and competent employer (NMS 18)
- there is a good quality training programme (NMS 19)
- all staff are properly accountable and supported (NMS 20)
- the fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers (NMS 21)
- foster carers are provided with supervision and support (NMS 22)
- foster carers are appropriately trained (NMS 23)
- case records for children are comprehensive (NMS 24)
- the administrative records are maintained as required (NMS 25)
- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose (NMS 26)
- the fostering service is financially viable (NMS 27)
- the fostering service has robust financial processes (NMS 28)
- local authority fostering services recognise the contribution made by family and friends as carers (NMS 32)

**Ofsted considers 1, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.**