

2495335

Registered provider: Keys Education Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A private company owns this home. It is registered to provide care for four children who may have behavioural and social difficulties.

There are three children living in the home and two were spoken to as part of the inspection.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 20 and 21 April 2021 to carry out a full inspection. The report is published on our website.

The manager resigned from this home in April 2021.

Inspection dates: 8 June 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 20 April 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection:

The home had a full inspection on 20 and 21 April 2021. The visit found that the arrangements for safeguarding children were inadequate. The acting manager and staff were not fully aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children, and effective action was not always taken when there was serious concern about a child's welfare. Two compliance notices were issued under section 22A of the Care Standards Act 2000. These related to regulation 12, the protection of children standard and regulation 13, the leadership and management standard.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/04/2021	Full	Inadequate
09/05/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

The acting manager and staff have taken action to address the steps in the compliance notices issued following the last inspection. However, the progress has not yet been embedded into practice to ensure that the children's outcomes are sustained.

Since the last inspection, one child has moved out of the home and there is a plan for two children to move into their new semi-independent home. The children's plans highlight the arrangements for moving on and the support that they require. One child has visited his new home, but he cannot move in until he is 18 years old. The provider has agreed to pay a retainer to hold the tenancy for him.

The children are being prepared for adulthood by taking responsibility for their own shopping, cooking, household tasks and personal care. However, their independence plans lack an assessment of their progress. This does not ensure that children receive support to develop the required life skills.

The acting manager has arranged planning meetings for all children. Similarly, she has requested and challenged professionals for outstanding documents, such as strategy meeting minutes and personal education plans. This information has been used to inform the children's day-to-day care and their placement plans. Staff said that the plans are much easier to read and follow.

Relationships between staff and the children have improved. As a result, the children are spending longer periods of time out of their bedrooms, helping staff with tasks, such as gardening, going out on activities and having meaningful conversations with staff, for example asking for support with their emotional health.

The children said that they now have a better relationship with the staff team. They said that the acting manager and staff now listen to their wishes and feelings. Children said that they have several means of expressing themselves through direct work sessions, children's meetings and through informal chats. However, children do not have external advocates to help them challenge decisions independently.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

The acting manager has reviewed the procedures in place. She has ensured that safeguarding processes are followed, which reduces risk and safeguards the children in her care. She has used external experts to inform practice and help the staff team develop through bespoke training.

Since the last inspection, all professionals involved in each child's care have attended planning meetings. The agreed actions from these meetings have been incorporated into children's care plans. For example, clear procedures have been put in place for children who may go missing from home or refuse to attend school. Some children said that they are unhappy with these restrictions. However, previously, the children were staying in bed during the day and refusing to attend education. One child said: 'The staff have explained why they are concerned about me and I am starting to understand why.'

Risk assessments and behaviour management plans have been revised. These documents now contain information and actions from strategy meetings and planning meetings and include the children's wishes and feelings. They are reviewed after any incident. Staff said that this has helped them to be consistent when dealing with a situation. Professionals spoken to at this inspection all said that they are confident that the acting manager and staff take the necessary action to safeguard children.

Children have been reported missing from the home. Members of staff have followed the local authority's protocol for reporting them to the police. The children are provided with a return home interview with an independent person. This good practice helps to identify any concerns or preventative work that can be undertaken with children. In addition to this, the acting manager has had good oversight of these incidents.

Children have received support from an external agency about the dangers of criminal and sexual exploitation and substance misuse. As a result, the children have been able to identify that they need additional support with their emotional health and well-being.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The registered manager has recently resigned from the post. There is a suitably experienced acting manager overseeing the home. A deputy manager supports her and the staff team.

Staff said that they have had an opportunity to discuss the findings from the last inspection. The acting manager has held team meetings to discuss the failings from the visit and the immediate improvements that are required. One member of staff said: 'It has been good. We have had time to reflect and I feel confident to be able to challenge staff or management if I am unhappy.'

At the last inspection, it was identified that the previous manager had poor management oversight. Staff did not fully understand their roles and the manager did not lead by example. The acting manager has made significant improvements. There is now clear leadership in place and the staff team have been directed and supported to understand their roles.

The acting manager has actively challenged other professionals to ensure that there is no drift and delay to the children's plans. She has also challenged poor practice and she has been able to reflect on the poor decisions that had been made by managers and staff. She has introduced new systems that will need to embed into practice. The challenge that has been offered has resulted in children having clear plans that involve them and the professionals in their lives.

The acting manager has worked in partnership with other professionals to ensure that a planned move takes place for a child who is moving on to independence. The manager advocated for the child's new home to be funded by the provider until he is practically able to move into the home, which was agreed. This has ensured that the child has good endings with his staff team, and he can gradually move into his new home in a way that meets his needs. The acting manager's actions are what a good parent would do.

Staff feel supported by the acting manager. They now have supervision. One staff member said: 'There is an open-door policy to address any concerns and everyone has been on board with the changes since the acting manager arrived.' Challenge is embedded within practice, which has resulted in the staff team routinely advocating to management on behalf of the young people they care for.

Since the last inspection, the staff have received training. The staff said that training and learning opportunities have been invaluable. For example, one member of staff said that the recent training about criminal child exploitation was insightful. She said: 'Understanding the risks and our role in protecting the children has made things clear for me.'

Internal monitoring systems have improved. However, there is a lack of consultation to elicit feedback from important people, such as children, family members, the staff team and professionals outside of the home. This means that the experiences of internal and external parties are not evaluated by the acting manager. This does not enable the acting manager and the staff team to reflect and learn from feedback to improve the care that they provide to their young people.

At the last inspection, six requirements were made. Five requirements have been met. One requirement around ensuring that there is an effective induction of each child into the home could not be assessed because no children have moved in. Therefore, this is a continued requirement. Two compliance notices were issued, and the steps within the notices have been actioned.

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, 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
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that arrangements are in place to— ensure the effective induction of each child into the home. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(i)(ii))	31 August 2021

Recommendations

- The registered provider must ensure that children have access to appropriate advocacy support. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 23, paragraph 4.16)
- The registered person should undertake a review that focuses on the quality of care provided by the home, the experiences of children living there and the impact the care is having on outcomes and improvements for the children. Specifically, ensure that consultation with children, parents, professionals and significant others is captured to inform practice in the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.2)
- The registered person must ensure that children receive help with practical skills such as cooking, housework, budgeting and personal care. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.27)

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: 2495335

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Keys Education Limited

Registered provider address: 2nd Floor, Maybrook House, Queensway,
Halesowen, Worcestershire B63 4AH

Responsible individual: Mark Dickinson

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Pam Nuckley, Social Care Regulatory Inspector
Carly Quinn, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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