

2507631

Registered provider: Keys Educational Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned by a private provider and offers care for up to four children. The provider states in its statement of purpose that care is provided for children with social and emotional difficulties. At the time of this inspection, two children were living in the home.

The manager has been in post since June 2023 and has applied for registration with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 September 2023

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: 24 October 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/10/2022	Full	Good
23/03/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness
27/07/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
04/02/2020	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

Inspection judgements

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

Children are making some progress in this home. One child, who previously found it difficult to attend school, has made a positive start to their new academic year at college. Another child continues to balance their time between attending college, their part-time job and time spent with their friends. Family members can identify some areas of progress that their child has made, although they also highlight areas for development that they say, seem to have 'stalled'.

Children do not always receive appropriate advice and guidance from staff about making safe and healthy choices. For example, opportunities to educate children about the dangers of smoking, vaping and drinking alcohol are missed. As a result, positive healthcare outcomes are not always achieved. Managers are currently exploring appropriate assessments for children to inform how the staff care for them.

One child has left the home since the last inspection. They were supported to consider their options and express their preferences about where they would like to live and the support that they would likely need in the future. Staff worked closely with external professionals to inform the child's future care planning. The child spoke positively about their experience of leaving the home. They said that they had everything they needed and that the support they received was 'brilliant'.

Another child may also be moving out of the home soon. They have been supported to share their views and wishes with the relevant professionals. However, the child expressed some uncertainty about their upcoming move, as they were not aware of the decisions that were being made or the options that were being explored by the people responsible for their care.

Staff are supporting children to develop some of the skills that they will need in the future, such as budgeting, grocery shopping and cooking. However, additional opportunities to support children's development further are missed. For example, staff are not supporting children to manage their own medication effectively. The difficulties that one child was experiencing when managing their own medication were not reviewed or analysed by the staff. Consequently, no additional support was provided, which resulted in minimal progress being made before the child moved out of the home. Plans have not been considered to help the current children in the home to manage their own medication.

Children are provided with opportunities to take part in the activities that they enjoy, including online gaming, going to the gym, playing in the garden and spending positive time with family members. One child spoke enthusiastically about how staff have developed positive relationships with their family. They explained that the staff

have listened to them, and that they have been supported to increase the amount of time that they are able to spend with the people who are important to them.

The home is large and spacious. There are photos of the children on display and suitable soft furnishings. The manager discussed aspirational plans for the development and refurbishment of the environment to help make it feel warmer and more homely. However, children's bedrooms are not always maintained to a good standard of cleanliness. During the inspection, bedrooms were found to be unclean and cluttered. Staff are not supporting children well enough to ensure that their bedroom is always a nice space for them to spend time in.

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

Restraint has not been used in this home since the last inspection. Restraint is a last resort and staff use other strategies to support children to avoid its use. However, there have been some occasions when staff and managers have not responded to the needs of children in a way that is in keeping with the home's behavioural management ethos. Previous management oversight has not always been effective, and blame has been disproportionately attributed to children or staff. Senior leaders have since identified these concerns and appropriate actions have been taken. However, opportunities to explore with children what could have been done differently have been missed.

When children go missing from home, staff follow the agreed protocols, including searching the local area, trying to contact the child and their friends, and reporting the incident to the police. When children return home, they are supported to reflect on their reasons for going missing and what could be done differently in the future. Advice and guidance from the provider's specialist support team is considered and appropriate actions are identified on most occasions.

When safeguarding concerns are identified, they are shared with the relevant external professionals to ensure that a multi-agency response is agreed. Despite this, actions and steps to mitigate risk are not always accurately recorded or shared with the staff team. As a result, guidance to staff is sometimes unclear and inconsistent.

When children raise concerns about staff, feedback is provided to them so that they can be assured that their concerns have been dealt with effectively. Learning is also shared with the staff team to avoid similar concerns in the future.

Leaders and managers have not taken all reasonable and practical steps to ensure that children are safely able to evacuate the building when they hear the fire alarm. Staff use fire drills to identify the difficulties that some children may experience when they are required to evacuate the building. However, no additional guidance has been provided to staff to ensure that they know each child's individual support needs.

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

Since the last inspection, there have been several changes to the management arrangements of the home. The current manager has a sound understanding of the strengths of the home and the areas for development. Nonetheless, the prior inconsistent management of the home has contributed to a lack of oversight, which has impacted on the progress of the children and the quality of care that is being provided by the staff.

The current manager is supporting the staff team to take more responsibility for some of the processes in the home, such as reviewing and updating children's care plans and risk assessments. However, some plans are inconsistent, and they do not accurately outline the needs of children or the strategies that staff need to support them. Key information is missing or lacks detail. Moreover, the care that children receive is not always reviewed for effectiveness.

Overall, staff training compliance for mandatory courses is high. However, when additional needs of children are identified, the management team is slow to offer additional training opportunities for staff. Although input from specialist services is used to inform staff practice, it does not negate the importance of staff receiving training to understand why they are doing what they are doing.

Staff meetings are well attended and have been used by the manager to reflect with the team about the changes they have experienced over the past year. Meetings are also used to reflect on the needs of the children and identify areas for improvement.

Staff are open about the difficulties they have experienced due to the changing management of the home. They explained that each manager has had different expectations of them, which has impacted on their morale as they have adjusted to their new responsibilities. However, staff were more positive about the current managerial arrangements. They said that they enjoy their job and that the team is becoming more supportive of one another.

External professionals said that their children are safe in the home. They said that communication is good, although there has been a lack of management presence in review meetings.

The manager acknowledges the challenges that have been experienced due to the considerable changes in the home. They recognise the importance of providing stability for the children and the staff team in the home's development plan. Some progress has been made towards realising the vision for the home, although the home is on a journey of improvement that may take some time to achieve.

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
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background; help each child to develop resilience and skills that prepare the child to return home, to live in a new placement or to live independently as an adult; and ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(iv)(vi)(c)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that staff help children to develop the skills they need to keep themselves safe and live independently. Care plans should accurately reflect the children's needs and support staff to provide effective care. In addition, the registered person should ensure that children's bedrooms are maintained to a good standard of cleanliness. Suitable furniture and storage should be provided to help children keep their bedrooms tidy.	18 December 2023

The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; understand how children’s previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children; are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same; and de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(ii)(iv)(ix)(x)(xi)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that staff are supported to help children to express themselves safely. Staff should be supported to understand the impact of their own responses on children’s behaviour and should help children to reflect on what could be done differently in the future.	18 December 2023
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children’s home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare.	18 December 2023

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; and understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(f)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that the monitoring and analysis of care support staff to meet the needs of children effectively. Moreover, the registered manager should ensure that when additional needs of children are identified, staff training is delivered promptly to help staff support children.	
After consultation with the fire and rescue authority, the registered person must— ensure, by means of fire drills and practices at suitable intervals, that persons working at the home and, so far as reasonably practicable, children are aware of the procedure to be followed in case of fire. (Regulation 25 (d)) In particular, the registered manager should ensure that staff have a clear understanding of the support children may need to safely evacuate the building.	31 October 2023

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: 2507631

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Keys Educational Services Limited

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

Responsible individual: Steven Cairns

Registered manager: Emma Lyall

Inspector

Martin Brown, Social Care Inspector

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