

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 the home's statement of purpose that care is provided for children with social and emotional difficulties. At the time of this inspection, three children were living in the home.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since May 2024.

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 May 2024

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	inadequate
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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: 5 September 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/09/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
24/10/2022	Full	Good
23/03/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness
27/07/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

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

Children's progress and experiences are variable. Children have significant barriers to their school attendance and most children are on part-time timetables. Staff are not consistent in their expectations of children attending school or engaging in learning in the home. Staff plan for social and learning activities but do not actively pursue alternatives when children choose not to be involved. Staff do not have up-to-date educational information for children, which further hinders their progress.

Staff are not always able to successfully encourage children to maintain healthy routines, particularly around sleeping. Some children are allowed to sleep into the afternoon, even on school days. Staff carry out regular checks during the day, but this is having little impact on the children's well-being. Lengthy periods in their bedrooms have led to non-engagement with formal learning, missing regular meals and sleep patterns being disturbed.

The 'Children's Guide to the Home' is colourful, informative and useful. It helps children to develop a sense of what it might be like for them to live in the home before they move in. There are plenty of photos of the home and staff.

Leaders and managers carefully consider the needs of children moving into the home alongside the needs of those already living there. Staff visit children and support them to visit their new home. This helps children to develop an early sense of being listened to and belonging. Children's bedrooms are mostly clean and tidy, although lack necessary furniture and personalisation for a homely feel. Some of the children have asked for their bedrooms to be decorated but no action has been taken for several weeks. This is of particular importance as some of the children have struggled to settle into the home.

When children move out of the home, leaders and managers ensure that the move is planned with familiar staff supporting the children's move. Staff support children with visits to their new home, telephone calls and visits after children have moved in.

Children are encouraged to participate in healthy routines, including sitting together for dinner and going to bed at a reasonable time to prepare them for the following day. Evening meals are social events, and the staff encourage everyone to eat together. Staff sensitively encourage the children to enjoy and maintain a healthy diet.

The environment is large and spacious, and clean and tidy. Leaders and managers are considering refurbishments of the home and changes to the layout to make better use of some spaces. The garden is large and well kept, with play equipment for the children, including a swing, trampoline and football goals.

Staff ensure that children attend all of their medical appointments for their physical and emotional health. Staff work with external services to understand when children may self-harm and how to support children to develop alternative ways to self-soothe.

Staff understand the importance that each child places on spending meaningful time with their loved ones. Staff take time to understand a child's family network and regularly speak to parents to help the time that children spend with the family to be a positive experience. This helps to ensure that children enjoy significant, valuable time with people who are important to them.

Staff support children to gain confidence and learn new skills. Some children enjoy a varied range of recreational and social activities to help them build their self-esteem and social skills. Most of the children enjoy activities outside of the home, such as going to the skatepark, horse riding, having beauty treatments and going to theme parks.

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

Feedback from children is mixed. Although children said that living in the home is OK, one child said that they do not feel listened to. They voiced concerns about feeling 'too scared' to tell people their views and opinions, as 'nothing would change'. One child also spoke about inequalities in how their finances are managed, which impacts their accessibility to essential hygiene products.

The management of complaints varies and is not consistent with the complaints procedure that is outlined to children. Managers are unclear about what constitutes a complaint and are unable to provide an accurate overview of complaints or concerns. Feedback is not always provided to children, which means that children do not always know that they have been listened to.

Some of the language used by staff is not child-focused and one child said they feel like 'a child in care'. Some care planning decisions inadvertently stigmatise children as being different from their peers.

A workforce development plan is in place which recognises the varied experience, skills and knowledge of staff. Suitable actions have been identified to upskill the team, although the plan is not regularly reviewed or updated. There is a lack of understanding of some important policies and procedures. Staff, including managers, were unable to name safeguarding individuals in the organisation.

When safeguarding concerns are raised about staff's practice, immediate action is taken to help keep children safe. Concerns are shared with the relevant professionals and actions and outcomes are agreed. Feedback is provided to children so that they know they are being protected from harm.

There have been two missing-from-home episodes since the last inspection. Staff take proactive action when children are missing from the home. Incidents are managed well with staff being clear on what is expected of them to search, follow and encourage a quick and safe return home. Return home interviews are undertaken and leaders and managers identify themes and learning.

Staff use a range of strategies to help children to express themselves and reduce the risk of self-harm. Staff follow clear procedures when children have harmed themselves in order to ensure that children are safe. There is a multi-agency response to self-harm, which includes input from the home's therapist.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Weaknesses in leadership and management are having a negative impact on children's overall experiences and progress, and undermine the safety and well-being of the children in the home. Leaders and managers have failed to provide children with consistency of care or stability in daily routines.

Leaders and managers are continuing to fail to meet statutory requirements. Since the registration of this home in January 2019, Ofsted has completed seven inspection visits. Regulation 13 (The Leadership and Management Standard) has been issued on six occasions. The registered provider is failing to make and sustain necessary improvements.

Staff talk about difficult dynamics in the home and describe a dysfunctional team that lacks consistency, experience and support. Leaders and managers have acknowledged that the work environment can be challenging and have taken some steps to start to improve the culture in the home. Despite staff noting some early improvements, the negative atmosphere in the home is having an impact on the care of children. One member of staff described the home as a 'miserable place' to be.

Staff supervision sessions are often consumed with discussions about the difficult team dynamics. There is minimal exploration about children's individual needs, the quality of care that they are provided with, and how staff can support children to overcome their barriers.

Children's files are not up to date and essential information such as care plans and personal education plans are missing entirely for some children. One child's progress seems to have stagnated and there has been minimal challenge from managers when the responses from external professionals has been insufficient. Staff do not always know how to care for children effectively.

Medication is stored securely and administered safely. Medication administration records are regularly audited, and inconsistencies are identified. This allows for leaders and managers to identify when staff may benefit from additional guidance about medication administration and recording.

The registered manager is new in post and has identified some areas for development. Some actions have been taken to address the requirements and recommendations that were raised at the last inspection, although many vulnerabilities in the quality of care that is provided remain. Team consultations, which include input from the home's therapist, provide a forum for staff to reflect on children's individual needs and the strategies that staff need to support them.

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— protect and promote each child's welfare; provide to the children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably; and provide to children personal items that are age appropriate for their age and understanding. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(ii)(vii)(viii)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that staff help all children to have healthy sleep hygiene routines. In addition, the registered person should ensure that children have access to any essential health or hygiene items. This specifically relates to children being supported to maintain healthy routines and self-care. This requirement has been restated from the previous inspection.	27 June 2024

The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to achieve the child’s education and training targets, as recorded in the child’s relevant plans; support each child’s learning and development, including helping the child to develop independent study skills and, where appropriate, helping the child to complete independent study; understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers; help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment; promote opportunities for each child to learn informally; maintain regular contact with each child’s education and training provider, including engaging with the provider and the placing authority to support the child’s education and training and to maximise the child’s achievement; and help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(viii)(x)) In particular, the registered person should support staff to provide care to children that promotes their educational attendance and achievement. When children are not attending full-time education, staff should engage children in suitable structured activities that promote their learning and development. This should also support children to build their confidence and help them to reintegrate into formal education. This requirement has been restated from the previous inspection.	18 July 2024
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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. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure the staff work as a team where appropriate; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; 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; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(b)(f)(h)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that the monitoring and analysis of care supports staff to meet the needs of children effectively. This requirement has been restated from the previous inspection.	1 August 2024
The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who— develop positive relationships with them; engage with them; and take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives.	18 July 2024

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— help each child to understand how the child’s views, wishes and feelings have been taken into account and give the child reasons for decisions in relation to the child; regularly consult children, and seek their feedback, about the quality of the home’s care; ensure that each child— is enabled to provide feedback to, and raise issues with, a relevant person about the support services that the child receives; ensure that an explanation is given to each child as soon as reasonably practicable after the child’s arrival about— how to make a complaint or representations in relation to the home or the care the child receives and how any such complaint or representations will be dealt with. (Regulation 7 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(iii)(iv)(b)(i)(d)(ii)) In particular, the registered person should respond and take action to address any complaints made by children. In addition, the registered person should ensure that children are aware of the complaints procedure and how to feed back about the care that they receive.	
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and ensure that staff— seek to involve each child’s placing authority effectively in the child’s care, in accordance with the child’s relevant plans; if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority’s or a relevant person’s performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child’s needs are met in accordance with the child’s relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (a)(b)) In particular, the registered person should challenge the placing local authority when there are delays in decision-making or shortfalls which are having an impact on caring for children.	1 August 2024

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, Third Floor, Queensway, Halesowen, West Midlands B63 4AH

Responsible individual: Michael Spencer

Registered manager: Ann-Marie Pollard

Inspectors

Martin Brown, Social Care Inspector
Stacey Pellow, Social Care Inspector

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