

2539752

Registered provider: Keys Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a privately owned children's home that is registered to care for up to four children. There were three children living at the home at the time of the inspection.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since April 2020.

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 October 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 11 February 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/02/2025	Full	Good
16/01/2024	Full	Good
20/03/2023	Full	Good
29/06/2021	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The physical environment of the home is safe and has improved since the last inspection. The children's views were considered when renovating the home.

All children are enrolled in education. Children's educational needs are identified shortly after the children move to the home, and staff ensure that children access the best suited education provision. The designated safeguarding lead professional at a child's college provided positive feedback about staff's ability to promote the child's education, saying, 'The staff really support our school's values and expectations and are always kind and encouraging with the child. They always advocate for their best interests.'

Children feel comfortable to speak to staff about their day-to-day worries, their individual health conditions, or substance use. Staff can meet the children's health needs, including supporting children to access primary health care, specialist support or urgent medical care. A social worker provided positive feedback in this respect.

Staff provide nurturing care for children and make every effort to develop positive relationships with them. Children's relationships with staff vary, and this impacts on the outcomes for children. When they form trusting relationships with staff, children thrive and make positive progress. An independent reviewing officer said, 'I have been pleased to see how the child has learned to trust their key workers. This has been vital in their development.' Another child's social worker commented:

[Staff] have built strong, trusting relationships with the child. They take time to listen to the child's views and concerns and provide consistent support. The child has expressed that they feel safe and respected by the adults in the home, which has contributed positively to their overall well-being.

When children have difficulties forming secure relationships with staff due to their individual needs and circumstances, this hinders their progress. The manager and staff are reflective and proactive about additional support that children may need in these instances. For example, the manager addressed a child's difficulties to settle in the home with the social worker, advocating for additional safeguards and support for the child and their family.

Children's moves in and out of the home are well planned, children's placing authorities are consulted and all children's needs are considered. When the local authority's plans are for children to return to their families' care, staff support parents to better understand the children's needs and offer support during and post reunification. When children leave the home at short notice, staff ensure that children have positive endings and advocate for children to maintain a level of stability, for example to remain in the same education provision.

Children are supported to develop independent living skills, such as cooking, budgeting, doing their laundry, keeping safe in the community, accessing support services, and developing their careers or seeking employment. One child, who moved into semi-independent living since the last inspection, acquired the necessary practical skills while living at the home. This was credit to both staff's efforts to support the child and the child's own personality and resilience.

Staff know the children's needs and capabilities well. However, when the usual strategies prove to be ineffective in supporting children to develop their independent living skills, the manager and staff do not have alternative bespoke strategies and plans on how to support the children. There are not sufficient advocacy and communication with the children's social workers to identify advanced ways of supporting children in a way that affords enough time for them to develop these skills at their own pace before moving to independent living.

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

Staff help children to keep safe, and children say that they feel safe at the home and in staff's care. Staff support children to take age-appropriate risks as part of developing their independent living skills and awareness of potential risks in the community. For example, staff negotiated a curfew and safe return home with a child when they left the home without permission to visit the local shops and to see friends in the local area.

Children's risk assessments and behavioural support plans provide clear advice to staff about the children's needs, reasons for their behaviours and how to reduce related risks. Staff understand children's behaviours and that this is a way of communicating their needs and feelings. Staff can identify risks associated with self-harming, past abuse, child sexual exploitation, children misusing substances, and missing-from-home episodes. Staff's behaviour management considers the children's individual needs, their care plans and risk assessments. This provides children with consistent responses from staff that supports them overcome their past trauma and provides them with stability and opportunities to reflect on their behaviours in a way that makes sense to them. There is evidence that staff's support reduces the risk of harm to children.

The number of safeguarding incidents is low. The manager takes appropriate actions to protect and help the children living at the home. For example, concerns around child sexual exploitation were reported to the social worker, the police and the local authority's designated officer, and emotional support was offered to the child. A medication error was addressed via an internal investigation and additional training for staff. The incident did not place the child's health at risk, and there have been no incidents since then. Physical intervention is rarely used in this home, and when this happens it is used proportionately and only when necessary to protect the children and staff at the home.

There have been two missing-from-home incidents since the last inspection. Staff's response was prompt in searching for the children, trying to maintain contact with them and working with partner agencies, such as the police and social workers, to safely return the children home. On both occasions, staff requested return home interviews for

the children. The children had an opportunity to share their views and worries with their social workers. Staff at the home and children's social workers worked well together to identify effective strategies on how to support the children to prevent further incidents.

Staff understand the risks of internet browsing and the impact on children's well-being of staying up late to access this or to chat with family and friends. Staff have age-appropriate and individualised strategies to support children in keeping themselves safe online and understand the impact of unsociable hours on their routines.

Staff promote safe spending time arrangements between children and the people important to them. Staff supervise children's family time when needed, support children's friends to visit them at the home, and facilitate age-appropriate activities for children and their friends in the community. Staff's relationship with children's families and the support offered to them varies, depending on staff and parents' understanding of children's needs and the associated risks, and the family dynamics and values.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is managed by an experienced and permanent manager, who has been in post since 2020. The manager and deputy manager lead by example in supporting staff to meet the children's needs. The provider's ethos of providing a nurturing environment to children is demonstrated in practice.

The manager does not shy away from difficult conversations and is able to assertively challenge staff's practice when this does not meet the required standards of care or the provider's ethos. Staff are encouraged to learn from practice and be transparent. The manager promotes a culture of prioritising children's safety and protection. Staff are aware of the whistle-blowing policy and are confident to use this if necessary.

Supervision and appraisals address practical issues and are reflective. Staff feel that the training offered by the provider alongside guidance from the management team are sufficient to ensure that they can understand and meet the children's needs.

The manager and the deputy manager understand the strengths and weaknesses of the home. Staff's good practice is acknowledged, and the manager has clear plans in place on how to address shortfalls. Staff are consulted before implementing team development plans and new strategies on how to support children. Staff's innovative and child-friendly approaches are encouraged and adopted as the home's strategies when these are proven to be effective in supporting children.

The manager and the deputy manager use incidents and feedback from staff, children and parents to learn from practice to improve children's experience at the home. The manager uses the provider's internal audits and the scrutiny of the monthly independent visitor efficiently to improve both his own and staff's practice.

There is good communication between the management team and other partner agencies, including children's placing authorities and education provisions. The manager

and the deputy manager have high expectations for children. They passionately advocate for the right support for children in relation to their health, education and protection. However, there is limited advocacy and efficient planning when considering children's preparation for independence.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the provider plays a full part in promoting the best interests of the children, proactively advocating for the children to ensure that others play their role and deliver the high-quality support that is needed, particularly when preparing children for independence. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 11, paragraph 2.4)
- As staff have a day to day understanding of children's capabilities and needs, the registered person should ensure that staff will have a valuable contribution to make to the pathway planning process, in particular supporting children develop the necessary practical skills in preparation for independence. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.28)

Information about this inspection

The inspector has 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: 2539752

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Keys Care Limited

Registered provider address: c/o Pinsent Masons LLP, The Soloist Building, 1 Lanyon Place, Belfast, Northern Ireland BT1 3LP

Responsible individual: Zoe Tompkins

Registered manager: Adam Lawrence

Inspector

Claudia Poienar, Social Care Inspector

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