

SC005567

Registered provider: Keys Stepping Stones Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately run home is registered to care for four children. The provider states in its statement of purpose that it provides care for children who may have social and/or emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in October 2013.

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 March 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 19 January 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/01/2022	Full	Outstanding
05/02/2020	Full	Outstanding
25/04/2018	Full	Good
17/01/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children have made exceptional progress from their starting points. This progress has been sustained over a long period, despite the complex nature of the children's needs. Children are supported to build strong and positive relationships with staff. There is a stable core team of staff who work well together with the children. This helps the children feel safe and secure.

The home is comfortable and homely. The children's bedrooms are personalised to their taste. One child said, 'I love it here.' Children are very settled, and they live in this home for long periods of time, enjoying a stable home life. A significant amount of care and attention has been taken to make this a welcoming home with a family feel.

Staff have very high aspirations for the children and support them with their education. All the children are successfully attending school. One of the children will complete their GCSE exams this year and is expected to do well. A member of school staff said, 'They [the staff] have worked wonders with [name of child].' Staff communicate very effectively with children's schools, which ensures that all people working with the children are fully informed about their well-being.

Staff communicate very effectively with each other when caring for the children. They meet regularly as a team and have detailed written and verbal handovers when they change shift. There have been some shortages in staffing recently and existing staff have done all they can to ensure that this does not negatively affect the children, by covering extra shifts so that the children are cared for by familiar staff. They offer consistency of care to the children. This means the children understand their boundaries and feel very safe and secure.

Children have detailed individual plans which are well understood by all the staff. Children are supported to pursue current interests and to try new experiences, such as army or police cadets, and one child is completing their Duke of Edinburgh Award. The children benefit from being involved in a variety of positive, structured activities and have the opportunity to build self-confidence based on their achievements.

Staff offer genuine warmth and acceptance to the children in their care. A staff member said, 'We love the children. We have a genuine attachment to them.'

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

Children live in a very safe environment. Staff understand the children in their care extremely well. There are detailed risk assessments for each child, which are dynamic and reflect any changes for the children. The risk assessments capture all the known risks and identify strategies for staff to follow. The regular reviews of the risks for children mean that, from their starting points, children's risks are well managed and have reduced considerably.

Staff have managed effectively the changing needs of children who have lived in the home for a long time. Staff use their close relationships and in-depth knowledge of the children in the same way a good parent would. Staff support and educate the children to make good choices that keep them safe.

Boundaries for children are very clear and behaviour is managed extremely well. Staff use a research-based restorative approach which helps children understand the consequences of their actions and lets them make amends. Children learn that it is normal to make some mistakes and that mistakes can be rectified. They learn that positive behaviour is in their best interests. These are essential lessons for a successful adult life.

Staff have a comprehensive understanding of the children, their complex histories and their needs. They offer lots of nurture and support to ensure that the children's emotional needs are met. There have been very few episodes of children going missing from the home, but when this has happened staff's detailed knowledge of the children and their behaviours has led to them being found and returned home quickly and safely.

The staff and manager have worked exceptionally well with partner agencies, such as education, health services and the local authority, to reduce risks for the children. A member of health staff said, 'They are the best care home I've ever worked with. The staff are [name of child]'s family, she is very attached to them.' The very close collaborative working with health and other agencies involved with the children has ensured that the children's needs are met to an excellent standard.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager and leadership team are very passionate about providing an environment which is like a caring family home. The management team is very child-focused. Managers know the children and the staff team well. They are aware of the home's strengths and weaknesses and use monitoring systems to identify when change or improvement is needed. The children are thriving in this environment and are well supported.

Staff have access to regular reflective supervision with the manager or senior staff members. They also have annual appraisals to support them to identify any learning needs. Some of the planning for workforce development is out of date, and the

manager is aware that this needs to be updated. Regular supervision motivates staff, keeps them engaged and helps them to remain enthusiastic about their role.

The home has a stable, consistent core team of staff who communicate very effectively with each other. Staff say that they enjoy coming to work. A staff member said, '[Name of manager] is the best manager I've ever had, he's really supportive.' This support from managers increases the likelihood of staff retention and means that children are cared for by a consistent team of motivated staff who are happy to be with them.

Although there is a core group of staff who know the children well, there have been some changes in the last year and on one occasion two less experienced staff members were paired with each other. This seems to have led to an incident escalating, which it may not have done if the children were being cared for by more experienced staff.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the workforce plan is kept up to date with details of staff and managers' training and development. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.8)
- The registered person should ensure that there are sufficient staff on each shift who know the children well and have the experience to prevent children's behaviour escalating. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 51, paragraph 10.1)

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: SC005567

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Keys Stepping Stones Limited

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

Responsible individual: Thomas Cappleman

Registered manager: Simon Bottomley

Inspector

Cathy Wilkins, Social Care Inspector

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