

# SC005567

Registered provider: Keys Stepping Stones Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

The home is operated by a private organisation and is registered to care for up to 3 children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

3 children were living at the home at the time of this inspection. 2 of the children spoke to the inspector.

The registered manager post is vacant.

### Inspection dates: 13 and 14 January 2026

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| <b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account | <b>requires improvement to be good</b> |
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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:** 29 January 2025

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none.

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 29/01/2025      | Full            | Good                 |
| 21/02/2024      | Full            | Good                 |
| 08/03/2023      | Full            | Outstanding          |
| 19/01/2022      | Full            | Outstanding          |

## Inspection judgements

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

Since the last inspection one child has moved into the home and one child has left. Children do not always benefit from care that is carefully assessed and planned to meet their individual needs. One child reported that they only sleep at the home and were therefore unable to share their experience of living there. Furthermore, staff supervision of children in the community is variable and does not always reflect the known risks in the local area. Consequently, children are not always supported effectively.

Children are supported to learn and develop in accordance with their interests and ability. All are enrolled with an education provider and are encouraged to attend. Staff support them to do this by arranging for children to be transported safely to and from education daily.

Children are helped and encouraged to remain connected to their family where it is safe and appropriate to do so. Staff support children to spend time with their friends in the home and on day trips in the community. Additionally, they take part in activities of their choice. This supports children to retain a sense of identity.

The environment is homely and decorated to a good standard. Children's bedrooms are well presented and personalised to reflect their personal interests and promote their identity.

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

Investigation records following allegations do not always include all the relevant information obtained as part of the investigation to evidence that a thorough investigation took place. Consequently, records do not accurately reflect the investigation process, which makes it difficult to monitor practice and ensure that children are fully protected. However, outcomes of allegations are shared with children.

Physical interventions are used appropriately to protect children. Children are supported to take part in debriefs following incidents. However, staff debriefs are not always completed to ensure that staff are supported to reflect on their practice.

Responses to children who go missing from home are not always effective. Staff search for children and work with safeguarding partners to support their safe return. However, when one child was missing for two days, staff attempted to contact the child by telephone on the second day and did not undertake a physical search. This reduced the effectiveness of their safeguarding actions and delayed efforts to locate the child. Additionally, children do not always have the opportunity to speak with an independent person about the reason why they were missing from home.

Leaders and managers do not consistently challenge poor safeguarding practice. Consequently, shortfalls in safeguarding practice were not identified until this inspection. Furthermore, there is a delay in practice learning to ensure that the safety and wellbeing of children is not compromised.

Leaders and managers do not ensure that medication is always safely stored away from children. As a result of this, children are exposed to unnecessary risks, such as accidental ingestion of medication.

Children's risk assessments accurately reflect their individual risks and provide staff with appropriate guidance on how to respond to safeguard children. However, for one child, the guidance in their missing from home plans is inconsistent, which means staff may not always have a clear understanding of how to respond when incidents occur.

Staff spoken to have a good understanding of children's risks and support children to understand the risks associated with their behaviour through frequent direct work.

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

The registered manager post is currently vacant. A new manager, who has a good understanding of the children and their needs has been appointed. She has submitted her application to register with Ofsted.

Staff say that they feel supported and meet regularly with leaders and managers to discuss their practice. Supervision records vary in quality, with some records being illegible and not reflecting that staff can reflect and learn from their practice. Additionally, records about children are not consistently positive.

Team meetings are held regularly and are well attended. However, they are not always used effectively. For example, leaders and managers have not supported staff to collectively reflect on incidents where one child went missing on two occasions during the night. This is a missed opportunity for group reflection and learning to develop and improve practice.

Leaders and managers have not ensured that staff receive training that enables them to meet children's specific needs. This means that staff do not always have the skills or knowledge to respond appropriately to children.

Monitoring systems in the home are not effective. Consequently, shortfalls in leadership and management, care planning and safeguarding practice, which reduces the quality of care that children receive were identified during the inspection.

Notification of significant events have not always been shared with Ofsted and the local authority's designated officer. This reduces the opportunity for independent oversight and scrutiny of the providers safeguarding practice.

Social workers and family members speak positively about the care that children in the home receive. Social care professionals commend leaders, managers and staff for their effective partnership working.

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

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 must comply within the given timescales.

| Requirement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Due date     |
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| <p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child;</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare.</p> <p>Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(i)(v)(vi)).</p> <p>Specifically, leaders and managers must ensure that statements from staff members who are the subject of an allegation, and statements from any witnesses, form part of the investigation.</p> <p>Leaders and managers must ensure that children's safety plans provide consistent information to staff about how to respond to children's risks and vulnerabilities.</p> <p>Leaders, managers and staff must ensure that children's missing from home protocols are followed. This includes ensuring that staff continue to physically search for children until children return home.</p> <p>Leaders and managers must ensure that medication is always stored away from children.</p> | 8 April 2026 |

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 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;

use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.

Regulation 13(1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(c)(f)(h)).

Leaders and managers must ensure that following significant incidents, staff are supported to reflect on the incident. Leaders and managers must ensure that this reflection is used to promote best practice, by identifying any areas of further development and putting support for staff, where suitable in place.

Leaders and managers must ensure that team meetings and supervisions with staff consider and reflect on safeguarding incidents that have occurred within the home.

Leaders and managers must ensure that staff are suitably trained to meet children's identified needs.

Leaders and managers must ensure that there are effective monitoring systems in place to monitor the quality of care that children receive. These systems must identify any shortfalls in

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| <p>practice and provide clear accounts of how these have been addressed.</p> <p>Leaders and managers must ensure that there is a clear record of any investigation conducted following an allegation made against staff. This must include the statements of all involved.</p> <p>Leaders and managers must ensure that records, such as supervisions, staff meetings and children's meetings are legible.</p> <p>Leaders and managers must ensure that language about children used and recorded in records, is not derogatory.</p> |              |
| <p>The care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home;</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose.</p> <p>Regulation 14(1)(a)(2)(a)).</p>                               | 8 April 2026 |
| <p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")—</p> <p>has spoken to the user about the measure; and</p> <p>has signed the record to confirm it is accurate.</p> <p>Regulation 35(3)(b)(i)(ii)).</p>                                                                                                                                                                  | 8 April 2026 |
| <p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p> <p>there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there;</p> <p>there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 8 April 2026 |



Regulation 40(4)(c)(e)).

This includes ensuring that safeguarding partners, such as the local authority designated officer, is always informed about significant safeguarding incidents.

## Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that when children go missing they are always offered an independent return home interview upon their return. (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards, page 45, paragraph 9.30).

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

**Responsible individual:** Thomas Cappleman

**Registered manager:** Post Vacant

## Inspector(s)

Chibuzo Otache, Social Care Inspector  
Michelle McGrath, Social Care Inspector

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