

SC005567

Registered provider: Keys Stepping Stones Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is run by a large private provider. It provides care and accommodation for up to four children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since October 2013.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCIFF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 January 2022

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	outstanding
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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: 5 February 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/02/2020	Full	Outstanding
25/04/2018	Full	Good
17/01/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
09/05/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children continue to make exceptional progress in relation to their individual starting points across many aspects of their welfare, physical, social, emotional and behavioural development. They benefit from exceptionally well-planned, highly individualised care that promotes their needs effectively, and contributes to continuing change and improvement in their lives.

There have been no placement breakdowns, disruptions, or failures since the last inspection in February 2020.

Children told the inspector, 'The adults care about me a lot. They help me with things that I struggle with. It's a nice, kind and caring home. I just like all the adults.'

Staff and children enjoy and experience high-quality relationships with each other. Children have lived at this home for over three years. They have developed strong attachments with staff and have a real sense of permanence and belonging. A social worker reported, 'I have been massively impressed. I would have to describe the quality of care as being brilliant.'

Children enjoy excellent attendance at school or other educational provision. Staff maintain highly effective partnerships with the providers of the children's education in order to promote their learning, full participation in school life and educational achievements. Staff have exceptionally high expectations and aspirations for all children.

Staff pro-actively supported the children's education throughout the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff supported children to maintain educational routines during periods of lockdown. This ensured that a degree of normality for the children was maintained. Children quickly returned to their full-time education placements.

Children are registered with the health services that they need to help them be healthy, and staff help them to attend all routine health and medical appointments. Staff work flexibly and enthusiastically with therapists and other specialist professionals to ensure that children benefit from the best possible help and all-round support. Medical consent is in place and staff are clear about and familiar with the health decisions that are delegated to them.

A specialist worker reported, 'It's a very therapeutic home, and I have nothing but praise for them. The staff know the children inside out and are very consistent. The dedication they have is second to none.'

Children enjoy a diverse range of stimulating and thoroughly enjoyable activities at the home and in the community. They enjoy scouts, playing in the garden den, swimming, roller skating and trampolining. Staff ensure that children benefit from lots of positive experiences.

Children are well supported to enjoy regular and good-quality time with their friends and families. This ensures that they sustain their close relationships with the people that are most important to them. A social worker reported, 'Staff have developed positive relationships with the family, which is helped by consistent workers accompanying the child on her family time.'

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

The safety of the children is consistently at the centre of staff's practice. Children's risk assessments and plans are kept up to date, and these are signed by all staff to ensure that they have a strong knowledge of, and are fully familiar with, the children's plans. A social worker reported, 'All staff are very helpful, and the key worker and staff have great insight and knowledge of the children's needs.'

Risks to children are significantly reduced. Children rarely go missing from the home. On the rare occasions that a child has gone missing, staff have followed appropriate protocols and procedures and responded quickly to incidents to secure children's safe and prompt return. Staff actively look for children if they are missing and maintain highly effective relationships with the police and other safeguarding agencies. The use of clear risk assessment and pro-active safeguarding practices promotes the safety and well-being of the children.

Children are kept safe and feel safe. Staff are trained in child protection and know how to protect children from abuse and other forms of significant harm. Significant incidents are always communicated to the appropriate authorities in a timely manner. This ensures that the right response from the appropriate authorities is sought to help keep children safe from harm.

A social worker reported, 'They support her fully in all aspects [of the child's care]. [They] have really good communication with professionals, and [they] keep me fully informed of what is going on for the child day-to-day, and [of] any significant incidents.'

Children know how to make a complaint. They have a good knowledge of the home's complaints procedure, and they know that their complaints are treated seriously by staff and the manager.

Children benefit from consistent routines and safe boundaries that promote positive behaviour, both inside and outside of the home. Staff have an excellent knowledge of the children's specific needs, vulnerabilities and behaviours, and can predict certain behaviours and prevent incidents from escalating.

A social worker reported, 'It is really clear that staff know the children really well. The key worker has a brilliant relationship with [the child]. It has enabled [the child] to have a solid and secure base with consistent staff who really understand her and can identify changes in her behaviour or presentation quickly.'

The use of restraint is always a last resort that is only ever used by trained staff to protect children from harm. Restraint records are detailed and are consistently evaluated, scrutinised and monitored by the registered manager. The use of sanctions is minimal and positive behaviour is consistently praised, acknowledged and reinforced.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home employs an extremely experienced, well-trained and appropriately qualified registered manager who demonstrates strong and highly effective leadership of the home.

The registered manager creates a culture of positivity at the home for staff and the children. The manager is an inspirational leader who has high aspirations for all children. He leads staff by example, stimulates staff's enthusiasm, and channels staff's efforts effectively.

The manager is fully supportive of staff's practice and ensures that they are highly valued, and professionally supervised and led. He manages staff effectively and staff communicate that they enjoy a high level of job satisfaction. One member of staff reported, '[The manager] is a hard-working manager. [He is] very supportive, and he's dedicated to the children.'

Staff have access to high-quality training and all staff have completed all mandatory training. Most staff working at the home are appropriately qualified. Additionally, staff have access to specialist training that enables them to meet the specific needs of the children effectively. Staff are trained in, and work to, the home's chosen model of care.

A social worker reported, 'Since the child has lived there, he has gone through positive change and progression. The home offers him stability and attachments, which he needs. He's had therapy, which I have commented on positively.'

The registered manager understands the plans for all of the children, and he ensures that the home provides children with a sense of belonging, stability and permanence for their futures. Staff aspire to make a positive difference to the lives of the children and share and implement the home's ethos, approach and philosophy in working with them.

There is a small number of staff vacancies to which the manager is attempting to recruit to. Once new staff are recruited, the home will be fully staffed and resourced. Every effort is made to ensure that continuity of care is provided for the children.

Children reported, 'At the beginning, I was like a crazy child. The adults have all been amazing. I trust them all. They are like my family.'

The registered manager routinely monitors the quality of the children's care. He makes positive use of the home's internal and external monitoring activities to secure the home's continuing development and improvement.

The quality of recording is extremely good. The children's records are written well, overall, with comprehensive records completed. Most records are stored electronically. However, there are some written records, such as key work sessions, that are still difficult to read. As a result, the previous recommendation from the last inspection is repeated.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that handwritten records are legible and signatures are accompanied by a typed or printed name. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person should ensure that the staff vacancies are recruited to. ('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, Queensway, Halesowen,
Worcestershire B63 4AH

Responsible individual: Mark Dickinson

Registered manager: Simon Bottomley

Inspector

Anthony Kyem, Social Care Inspector

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