

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 provides care for up to 4 children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

There were 3 children living at the home at the time of the inspection. All of the children were spoken to.

The manager registered with Ofsted in April 2026.

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 April 2026

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	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: 13 January 2026

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
13/01/2026	Full	Requires improvement to be good
29/01/2025	Full	Good
21/02/2024	Full	Good
08/03/2023	Full	Outstanding

Summary of findings

Leaders, managers, and staff are not providing consistent care to all children living in the home. One child spends very limited time at the home, and staff cannot be confident that the child's overall needs are being met. There are also inconsistencies in safeguarding practice. These shortcomings compromise the safety and welfare of one child living in the home.

Inspection judgements

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

Children's experiences of living in the home are varied. Two children have developed positive relationships with staff and say that they are happy living in the home. However, one child's experience is less positive, and they rarely spend time in the home. This significantly reduces the opportunities for staff to build a consistent, trusting relationship with the child.

Care planning for one child is ineffective. As the child spends minimal time in the home, staff are not aware of whether the child's day-to-day needs are being met. This lack of effective oversight means that managers and staff cannot be assured that the child is receiving appropriate care.

Children's wishes and feelings are mostly heard and considered. However, for one child the request for additional support with hair care was not sensitively explored, which resulted in this need being met by their education setting on one occasion.

Children are registered with a doctor, dentist and optician and are supported to access and attend health appointments when they are unwell. This supports children to maintain a good standard of health.

Children are supported to learn and develop. When children are reluctant to take part in their identified education programme, staff speak to children about why engagement is important. Education staff at the school for two of the children, commended the staff team for their commitment to the children's education and ensuring that they have a positive experience in school.

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

Children whose risks and vulnerabilities are less clear are not always adequately supervised and supported. For example, despite leaders, managers and staff being aware of new risks for one child in the local community, they have not demonstrated that they have worked effectively with other agencies to manage these. As a result, there was no coordinated plan to reduce or manage risks and there was little

understanding as to how the home and multi-agency actions taken were making the child safer.

Most children are supported to understand the risks associated with their behaviour. However, for one child, leaders, managers and staff have not undertaken targeted direct work in relation to the child's current identified risks and vulnerabilities. Failure to do this means that the child does not have the relevant knowledge to make informed safe choices.

When children go missing from home, staff know how to respond and work jointly with safeguarding professionals such as the police to support their safe return. Leaders and managers ensure that incidents are reviewed and evaluated, to ensure that the action taken by staff is effective.

Allegations are managed effectively. External professionals, such as the child's social worker, Ofsted and the local authority designated officer are informed of both the allegation and the outcome of the investigation, to ensure that there is independent oversight. Where practice shortfalls are identified, appropriate action is taken to reduce further risks to children.

Recruitment processes in the home ensure that children are cared for by suitable adults.

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

There have been changes to the management arrangements since the last inspection. The registered manager is on a planned absence from the home. Currently the home and staff team are being led and managed by a covering manager, who is supported by the responsible individual. The manager is motivated and has a clear vision for the home.

Leaders have not been proactive in ensuring changes are made to the electronic recording system so that records accurately reflect who completes evaluations. As a result, management evaluations continue to be recorded under the registered manager's name despite her currently being absent from the home. This does not ensure that there is clear accountability for management oversight and decision making.

New staff speak positively about the home's induction process and describe the training as useful. Staff have access to a comprehensive training programme. However, the manager has not identified that one member of staff has not refreshed their mandatory training in the required timescales. This means that staff are not consistently equipped with the up-to-date knowledge needed to safely and effectively meet children's needs.

The home's statement of purpose has not been updated to accurately reflect staffing arrangements in the home. For example, there is reference to the deputy manager working in the home for eight years, which is inaccurate. In addition, leaders, managers and staff are not providing care for one child in the manner set out in the home's statement of purpose.

Staff receive practice related supervision that they say is beneficial. However, on one occasion, when a staff member declined to participate in a supervision, alternative arrangements with another manager were not explored. As a result, the supervision session did not take place, and the staff member missed the opportunity to reflect on and discuss their practice.

Staff say that they feel supported and are confident in the current manager's leadership. One staff member said, 'The manager has come in and has constantly checked in on us. He has picked up shifts when we have been short staffed and has been consistent'.

Team meetings take place regularly and are generally well attended. They provide staff with opportunities to discuss children's current support needs and for leaders and managers to reinforce management expectations regarding practice. This promotes a consistent and shared approach to caring for children.

Leaders, managers and staff have formed positive relationships with the children's social workers and teachers. Social workers commend leaders, managers and staff for the care and support provided to the children.

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
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— 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; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(i)(v)(vi)) Leaders and managers must ensure that children's safety plans provide staff with effective strategies that reduce the risk of harm to children. Leaders, managers and staff must ensure that, based on the risk of harm, children are appropriately supervised in the community.	9 July 2026
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended	9 July 2026

that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose. (Regulation 14(1)(a)(2)(a))	
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. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child's best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare; help each child to express views, wishes and feelings; 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. (Regulation 7(1)(a)(b)(c)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)) Specifically, leaders and managers must ensure that every child's requests for care and support are taken seriously. Where these requests cannot be met, the reasons why should be shared with the child. There should also be a clear recording of the child's requests and what action has been taken in response to this. If the request cannot be made, the reason for the request being refused should be recorded.	09 July 2026
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child;	9 July 2026

are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36(1)(a)(b)(c)) Leaders and managers must ensure that case records, such as management evaluations, accurately record the author.	
The registered person must— keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. If a home has a website, the registered person must ensure that a copy of the statement of purpose is published on that website unless the registered person considers that such publication would prejudice the welfare of children in the home. Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose. Nothing in paragraph (5) or regulation 46 (review of premises) requires or authorises the registered person to contravene or not comply with— any other provision of these Regulations; or any conditions in relation to the registration of the registered person under Part 2 of the Care Standards Act 2000. (Regulation 16(3)(a)(5)(6)(a)(b)) Specifically, leaders and managers must ensure that children are cared for in accordance with the statement of purpose. Leaders and managers must ensure that information about the staff team is accurate and up to date.	9 July 2026

Recommendation

- The registered person must have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice, their training needs and the needs of the children assigned to their care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)

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: Natasha Nzeribe

Inspector

Chibuzo Otache, Social Care Inspector

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