

SC008490

Registered provider: Keys Stepping Stones Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home provides care for up to four children. The provider states in its statement of purpose that care is provided for children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties (social and emotional difficulties). The home is privately owned and managed.

The manager registered with Ofsted in February 2016.

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 August 2022

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	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 2 February 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
02/02/2022	Full	Good
10/03/2020	Full	Good
11/09/2018	Full	Good
05/07/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Three children live at this home. They enjoy good relationships with staff, who promote a positive environment for children. Children benefit from well-planned care that promotes their needs effectively. Children attend school on a regular basis and staff promote their educational achievements and learning. One child has recently had a poem published because they won a young writer's poetry competition at school.

Staff maintain effective partnerships with the families of children, schools, social workers and other professionals to ensure that children benefit from the best possible help and all-round support. An independent reviewing officer said, 'The care given to my young person has always been good and child centred.'

Children benefit from a diverse range of enjoyable activities, and staff promote their interests and hobbies. Children enjoy holidays, ballroom dancing, car shows, theme parks and photography. Children develop their confidence and social skills because of these positive and enjoyable experiences. A child said, 'I like my key worker because she takes me on holiday. The best thing is playing games with staff. I like everything about [name of home].'

Staff support children to sustain their close relationships with their friends and families. Staff ensure that family time is a positive and safe experience for children. Children know how to make a complaint and their complaints are treated seriously.

There are good arrangements to meet the health needs of children. Children are registered with the health services they need to stay healthy. Staff encourage children to attend their health appointments and work closely with the home's therapist to deliver care that meets the specific needs of the children. A social worker said, 'I'm kept fully informed and am pleased with the staff and the strategies they use and have put in place.'

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

Staff prioritise the safety of children. Risks associated with children are well known and understood by staff. Risk management plans are in place to help staff manage children's behaviours safely. However, the assessment used by the manager to make decisions about the suitability of children coming to live at the home does not include clear evidence of consultations with professionals to demonstrate robust decision-making.

The home has served notice on a child's placement due to an increase in escalating, unsafe behaviours that place the child and staff at increased risk of harm. Staffing levels for the child have been increased to help address some of the safeguarding concerns.

The placing authority may have identified a possible place for the child to move to. However, the notice period to end the child's time at the home has elapsed and no contingency plans have been made with the placing authority. A requirement is made in respect of this matter.

Children rarely go missing from the home. However, when children have gone missing, staff actively look for them. On all occasions, staff have found the children quickly and encouraged them to return home safely. Staff maintain highly effective partnerships with social workers, police and other safeguarding agencies to protect children and keep them safe from harm.

Significant incidents are reported promptly to the appropriate authorities to promote the safety of children. Allegations are shared quickly with the local authority designated officer to ensure that allegations are investigated effectively.

Staff have a good awareness of children's emerging risks and behaviours. Staff only hold children as a last resort to protect children from harm. There is management oversight of staff's practice. Following all incidents, debriefs take place with children and staff to reflect on incidents.

Staff help children to manage their feelings and behaviours safely. Consequences to manage unacceptable behaviour are fair and proportionate.

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

The home employs a full-time manager, who registered with Ofsted in February 2016. However, the registered manager is currently on maternity leave. There have been some staff changes with staff members leaving. This has led to an increase in the use of agency staff. These changes have had an unsettling impact on the children.

An experienced and skilled registered manager from another home has been brought in to help support the children, deputy manager and staff. There is now improved management presence and oversight of practice. The manager quickly realised that the home was unable to meet the specific needs of a child, so served notice on the placement. They have taken the decision to not move any more children into the home during this unsettled period.

New staff have been recruited. Once they are in post, it will lessen the need for the use of agency staff and improve continuity of care for children. Staff employed to work with children are selected and vetted carefully. Safe recruitment practices are adhered to.

Staff are provided with regular supervision and benefit from good-quality training to develop their skills and knowledge to meet the specific needs of the children.

The performance of the home is scrutinised effectively. An independent professional visits the home on a regular basis to report on the quality of the children's care and the home's arrangements to keep children safe. This helps the manager and staff to tackle shortfalls and understand any weaknesses associated with the home.

The standard of the accommodation provided for children has deteriorated since the last inspection. The home would benefit from complete redecoration and there are some outstanding repairs that require attention. The home would benefit from soft furnishings to make it more welcoming and homely.

The covering manager has carried out an evaluative quality of care review and devised a plan to secure the home's improvement. This includes planned improvements to the accommodation, training workshops for staff, and supporting the stability and development of the staff team.

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

Statutory requirements

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

Requirement	Due date
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child; and enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(i)(ii)) This particularly refers to the complete redecoration of the home and the completion of all outstanding repairs.	3 October 2022
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that arrangements are in place to— ensure the effective induction of each child into the home;	31 August 2022

manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child's placing authority. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(i)(ii)(iii)) This relates specifically to there being a contingency plan agreed with a child's placing authority when a contract notice period has expired.	
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the 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 that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)) This relates specifically to risk impact assessments, including the outcome of consultations held with relevant professionals and what contact was made with the child's social worker and previous carers.	26 September 2022

Recommendation

- The registered person should demonstrate every effort to achieve continuity of staffing so that children's attachments are not overly disrupted, including ensuring that the employment of any temporary staff will not prevent children from receiving continuity of care. ('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: SC008490

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: Claire Brady

Inspector

Anthony Kyem, Social Care Inspector

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