

SC008490

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This home provides care and accommodation for up to four children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is privately owned and managed.

Visit dates: 15 to 16 December 2020

Previous inspection date: 10 March 2020

Previous inspection judgement: Good

Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for
- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings from the visit

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Young people benefit from receiving highly individualised, well-planned care that promotes their needs effectively and contributes to change and improvement in their lives. Young people enjoy warm and secure relationships with staff, and benefit from having consistency and stability in their lives.

A social worker reported, 'I am very happy with the quality of the care provided to my young person, who is thriving and becoming more settled at [the home].'

Young people attend school regularly with good support and encouragement from staff. Personal education plans are obtained to promote young people's learning and educational achievements. However, one young person is currently home-schooled, which limits his opportunities to socialise with his peers and participate in extra-curricular activities. That said, young people make good progress with their learning, considering their individual starting points.

Staff act as positive role models for young people. Young people benefit from having trusted adults who they can look up to and learn from. Young people are registered with a doctor, dentist and optician, and have access to these services when they need them. They benefit from having access to in-house therapy to promote their emotional and psychological well-being.

A social worker reported, 'My young person has made good enough progress, with her now feeling stable to proceed with planned therapeutic work which works alongside the care provided.'

The home provides young people with a physically safe, warm, comfortable and homely living environment. Young people reported, 'It's a good home because they look after me. I enjoy playing cards, board games and Minecraft. I will continue with horse riding after lockdown ends. It's nice having Waffle [the manager's pet dog] – that's the best thing.'

The safety of children

Staff have a good understanding of the specific needs and emerging vulnerabilities of young people, and take appropriate action to address these. The use of clear risk assessments and effective, safe working practice promotes the safety and well-being of young people. Young people are kept safe and feel safe.

There have been no unauthorised absences or missing persons episodes. Significant incidents are reported to the appropriate authorities charged with a duty to protect young people. This ensures that the right action is taken by the right professional agencies to keep young people safe from harm.

There has been an allegation made and while it was reported to the designated officer and the placing authority, there was no evidence to show that this was also

shared with Ofsted, which is a breach in regulation. As a result, a requirement is made in respect of this issue. The allegation was unsubstantiated.

Staff have high expectations of the young people's behaviour. They provide a caring, supportive and nurturing environment for young people. The use of consequences to address negative behaviour is fair, balanced and proportionate. Positive behaviour is recognised, and is consistently praised and reinforced by staff.

The use of restraint is always a last resort that is only ever used to keep young people safe from harm. Young people benefit from receiving effective support, help and protection. A social worker reported, 'The home has and continues to promote the safety and well-being of my young person by putting in any additional support, both practical and emotionally, that may be required to keep him safe.'

Leaders and managers

A committed, well-qualified and experienced registered manager oversees the day-to-day operations of the home. They ensure that the needs of young people are prioritised effectively, and that staff are well supported, managed and led. A social worker reported, 'The staff are very proactive and consistent with their approaches, which allows the young person to feel in a safe environment.'

Staff meet the aims and objectives as set out in the home's statement of purpose. They provide a good-quality service for young people. Young people benefit from living in a home that is managed efficiently and effectively. A young person reported, 'I love it here.'

Staff are enthusiastic about their roles and responsibilities as the caregivers for the young people. They meet the needs of young people effectively, and work in a child-centred, therapeutically informed way. The young people respond well to this approach and have established positive attachments and relationships with staff.

The registered manager makes good use of the home's internal and external monitoring activities. This enables them to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the home. The registered manager rectifies any associated shortfalls and acts quickly to secure the home's continuing improvement.

The two requirements made at the last inspection have been addressed. One recommendation and a requirement are raised as a result of this inspection.

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
40: Notification of a serious event The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; a child protection enquiry involving a child— is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e))	18 January 2021

Recommendations

- Children should be in full-time education whilst they are of compulsory school age, unless their personal education plan contained within the care plan or other relevant plan states otherwise. The home must aim to support full time attendance at school unless the child's relevant plan indicates this is not in their best interests. ('Guide to the children homes regulations, including the quality standards', paragraph 5.14, page 28)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC008490

Registered provider: Keys Stepping Stones Limited

Registered provider address: 2nd Floor, Maybrook House, Queensway,
Halesowen, Worcestershire B63 4AH

Responsible individual: Sarah Haworth

Registered manager: Claire Brady

Inspector

Anthony Kyem, Social Care Inspector

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