

SC008490

Registered provider: Keys Stepping Stones Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a private children's home registered for up to four children who may have social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in June 2023. She is suitably experienced qualified.

There were four children living in the home at the time of the inspection. The inspectors spoke with all children.

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 March 2025

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	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 21 November 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/11/2023	Full	Good
10/08/2022	Full	Good
02/02/2022	Full	Good
10/03/2020	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children benefit from long term placements at this home, providing them with stability and permanence. The staff team provides children with nurturing care and support and because of this, children have positive relationships with the staff team. Children are provided with consistent routines, structures and boundaries, to help them settle into the home. Children report that they are happy in the home.

Overall, children make good progress in all areas of their lives. This includes areas such as developing their self-care skills, managing their emotions, developing their self-esteem and independence skills. Effective independence planning packages are in place to support children in developing their practical skills and knowledge for adulthood. Social workers are positive about the quality of care provided to children.

Children participate in their care planning meetings. Keywork sessions with children are conducted regularly by staff, focusing on the child's views in relation to their individual needs. Topics are revisited to enable the child to reflect, to express their feelings and to ensure that they are listened to. A company-wide young inspectors' scheme is another forum for children to share their views and to contribute to improving their quality of care. It also helps to develop children's confidence and social skills.

The staff team understand the children's health needs, including accessing additional specialist support that children require. They collaborate with child and adolescent mental health workers, psychologists and therapists to ensure that children's emotional well-being is promoted and monitored closely. Children's trusting relationships with staff means that they are comfortable talking through their feelings with those they have close bonds with.

Leaders and managers have good relationships with partner agencies to ensure that children's educational needs are met. They attend all education related meetings to ensure that there are clear arrangements in place for children, including those who are not attending school. They challenge decisions that may impact on children's progress in education. However, for one child, contingency plans are not in place for them to access further education in the new area they may move to. Although a local college course has been secured, the staff team has not yet explored colleges in other areas of the country that the child may live, in preparation for the child moving to semi-independence.

Children's interests and hobbies are promoted through weekly classes and clubs, such as dance, swimming and horse-riding classes. They spend time with each other and their friends in the community. Their friends visit their home and stay for sleep overs. Children spend regular time with those who are important to them. Staff support children effectively to rebuild and sustain relationships with their family.

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

Staff invest in children's safety and wellbeing. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding children. They manage significant risks effectively to ensure that children can continue to live together safely.

When children struggle to keep themselves safe or work with the boundaries implemented by staff, the manager supports the staff team to explore triggers to children's behaviour to help them get back on track. The manager uses her review of serious incidents and her knowledge of the children to identify what is going on for the child and to implement additional support systems they may require. The managers also debriefs staff following all incidents to enable them to reflect on their practice and to identify alternative ways to support children.

Leaders and managers take suitable action to explore any allegations made by children. However, on one occasion they have failed to evidence the process followed in their decision to leave a staff member on shift, following an allegation made by a child. In addition, one child's risk assessment that includes an agreed multi-agency approach to managing allegations alongside the local authority designated officer has not been reviewed.

Staff use their positive relationships with children to help them to manage their behaviour. Restraint is used only as a last resort and when necessary to keep children safe. Staff are initiative-taking in reducing risks for children as they occur and so the police are not used to manage incidents. Children's behaviour management plans reflect their views of how they prefer to be supported by staff and the strategies that are helpful to them. Direct work is always undertaken with children following any significant incident, to help them to understand the risks and how to make safer choices.

Children rarely go missing from the home. Staff consistently follow children's missing-from-home protocols, and they are proactive in their approach to try and locate and return children. Consequently, children have not been missing overnight or for prolonged periods of time.

Leaders and managers demonstrate an effective multi agency approach to keep children safe from harm. There is a wide range of internal and external professionals that the staff team consults with to assess children's needs and to mitigate risks. This includes police liaison officers, substance misuse, harmful sexual behaviour and self-injury specialists.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager knows the children very well. She is integral to children feeling safe and happy in the home. She is a positive role model for the staff. Her knowledge of the children is filtered down the staff team, which means that children are provided with the individualised care and support that they require.

The manager always looks for opportunities to improve children's experiences of residential care and to promote their life opportunities. She advocates well for children, to ensure that their needs are met and that any decisions made support their individual development and reflect their views, wishes and feelings.

The staff team report that leaders and managers support them well. They are provided with clear and consistent guidance about the support in place for children. Consequently, the staff team works together to provide a good quality of care for children. The core staff team is stable. The provider has their own bank staff who know the children well and they are used on the occasions that core staff are unable to cover shortfalls in the rota.

The manager uses team meetings to share research-based practice, to share valuable information relating to children's care planning and to feedback from any lessons learned. A variety of specialised professionals attend the meetings to deliver training and to guide staff in the work they do with children. For example, a programme of neurodiversity workshops is currently being undertaken with the staff team. In addition, the manager ensures that staff are trained in a wide variety of areas bespoke to children's needs and risk behaviour.

Staff are provided with regular practice-related supervision to review their practice. Staff are recognised companywide for their initiative-taking practice, particularly where they have worked hard to keep children safe. Any performance issues are dealt with quickly to ensure that individualised support and training is identified and implemented. The manager has also introduced a mentoring system to upskill both her senior team and residential staff.

The independent visitor's reports provide additional scrutiny of the service and support the manager in her development of the quality of care provided to children. The manager's review of the quality-of-care report captures progress made by each of the children and provides a clear evaluation of how staff practice has supported positive change.

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 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; 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)(h)) Specifically, leaders and managers should evidence the process that they follow when they are making decisions about whether staff should remain on shift, following allegations made by children. The manager should ensure that their oversight of allegation management records is effective. When a risk assessment has been agreed as a multi-agency approach to managing allegations made by a child, there should be evidence of it having been regularly reviewed with the LADO and the child's social worker.	2 May 2025

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that they work with local authorities who have a number of responsibilities in relation to education and training for 16–19-year-olds, including ensuring that sufficient provision is available to meet their needs. Children's homes should work with the local authority to make sure the young people they are responsible for are getting the support they need to participate. Specifically, contingency plans should be in place for children's further education, both in the local area and if they move away from the area when they move out of the home to prepare for adulthood. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.17)

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

Responsible individual: Thomas Cappleman

Registered manager: Megan Wells

Inspectors

Cheryl Field, Social Care Inspector
Angeline Clarke, Social Care Inspector

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