

SC020602

Registered provider: Keys NHCC Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private company. It is registered to provide care for up to five children aged between eight and 17 who have experienced adverse childhood experiences which have led to associated trauma and presenting complex needs.

The home also cares for children with autism spectrum disorder who may have associated sensory needs and attachment difficulties.

The home is managed by an experienced manager who registered with Ofsted in March 2017.

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 SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021. We last visited this setting on 5 February 2020. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 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: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/02/2020	Full	Good
13/03/2019	Full	Outstanding
21/11/2017	Full	Good
17/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children at this home receive high-quality, individualised care that is bespoke to them. Staff know the children extremely well and provide care which is consistent, child focused and nurturing. Children thrive at this home and their progress from their starting points is extraordinary. For one child, this has meant that he has been able to return home to his family.

Staff use research-informed practice to better understand the children they are caring for. For example, research into shame and blame in teenagers has helped staff to better understand why one child's guilt manifested the way it did. Staff then implemented strategies which helped the child to explore their feelings. As a result of this approach, incidents are greatly reduced, and children are better able to reflect on how their emotions impact on them and have strategies to manage their emotions.

Staff's exceptional skills and knowledge have enabled a child with autism spectrum disorder to fully integrate into the home. As a child with limited verbal communication, this could be a barrier. Staff and children have been proactive in learning about his communication system, with one child taking the lead in encouraging a sign of the week for everyone to learn. As a result, the child is fully included in all discussions and children's meetings.

Professionals spoken to are very complimentary about the home and the progress of children. One social worker was worried about their child being cared for in a children's home but has found that it has been a good match for him. He told the inspector that the home is homely, the child makes excellent progress, the other children accept him, and he is included in all aspects of the home despite his additional needs.

Staff encourage education. If children are struggling, staff find out the reasons and suggest alternatives. For one child, this meant a period of online learning and finding a new school. This was a real benefit to him. Online learning focused him, and he realised that he liked learning. This helped when he transitioned to a new school. Staff have helped children with their next steps in looking at and making applications to college and apprenticeships. Consequently, children achieve in education and are aspirational about their futures.

Children have opportunities to engage in a wide range of activities. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions on attending clubs, staff encouraged children to follow alternative interests. One child used an online platform to learn to play the guitar. Now restrictions have been lifted, he attends a weekly band workshop. Another child, who previously would not go out and join in activities, is now regularly going horse riding, swimming, and loves dance. As a result, staff help

children to find things they are interested in and encourage them to pursue their interests.

Staff help children to become more independent. They encourage children to undertake chores around the home and, as they get older, they are helped with managing their finances, cooking and shopping. Staff also think of creative ways to help children. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, staff could not take a child to the area they were moving to so they could get to know the area. Instead, staff used online maps and street views to explore the area with the child. As a result, the child was much more familiar with the area they were moving to, which helped to reduce the child's anxiety.

Staff promote children's health needs to a high standard. Staff are proactive in seeking support from health professionals or will devise their own strategies. For example, staff support children to express their views about the medication they are taking and what feels right for them. Staff introduce positive night-time routines, which results in children sleeping better and reduces the need for medication.

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

Staff develop comprehensive risk assessments and behaviour plans which help to keep children safe. These robust plans promote children's learning. For example, key-work sessions to reflect on incidents have helped children to explore their emotions and develop strategies for the next time they feel that way. As a result, incidents at the home are rare.

Staff help children to learn about risks and the impact that discrimination can have on others. For example, children learn about online safety and risks from others, and they develop their understanding of other cultures and the need to support those who are less fortunate. This has enabled children to be aware of others, not just themselves, and have empathy and to show kindness. This was clearly seen by the inspector when observing children's interactions with each other. Children are empathetic towards children with complex needs and include them in activities without being prompted to by the adults around them.

Incidents at the home are rare. There are few incidents of children going missing from care, and physical intervention is only used when absolutely necessary. Staff support children following incidents in a very nurturing way. Staff explore the reasons behind incidents with children and help them to develop strategies. Consequently, children are settled at the home, and behaviours which require staff intervention are infrequent.

Children do not experience bullying from each other, although there are occasional conflicts or verbal exchanges which can cause upset. Staff take immediate action to explore with children the reasons for the conflict or unkind words so that behaviours do not escalate to bullying.

Managers take prompt action when there are concerns. For example, when it was found that a child was using a mobile phone inappropriately and putting themselves at risk online, managers removed the phone and reported this appropriately. Staff then helped the child to undertake further online safety awareness training before having a phone again. Consequently, staff help children to understand risks and how to keep themselves safe.

Concerns from complaints or allegations are treated seriously by managers and are fully investigated. This means that children feel able to raise concerns in the knowledge that staff will listen and take their concerns seriously.

Managers make sure that staff, including agency staff, are safely recruited. Consequently, staff working at the home are suitable to care for children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is managed by a committed, child-focused practitioner who puts the children at the centre of everything she does. She sets high expectations for herself and the staff team and wants the very best for everyone. As a result, staff are motivated and committed to excellent care. This is demonstrated in the high-quality care provided to children and in the exceptional progress they make.

The manager knows the children well. She demonstrates clearly how the home supports children to make progress, such as returning home to families or moving to supported lodgings.

The manager has made sure that children's care is individualised. She has undertaken research on topics such as sensory needs for children with autism spectrum disorder and why soothe boxes help all children. This research has informed children's plans and upskilled staff's knowledge in delivering individualised care. The manager is proactive and keen to try new things. She looks at research for new ideas on how to get the best out of children living at the home. The manager has used research and theories to help staff understand the rationale of why they care for children in a particular way. Consequently, children's progress often exceeds expectations.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, when children and staff had the virus, some staff remained at the home for several days to make sure that the children were cared for by those who know them well. Unfortunately, the manager also contracted the virus during this period but remained in daily contact by telephone and sent treats such as doughnuts to keep everyone's spirits up.

The manager has undertaken research in developing an improved workforce development plan. This now focuses much more on the needs of the home. She has completed individual analysis of staff and their skills, their learning styles and how staff matching is important to the dynamics of the staff team. She has identified staff's training needs, which staff are likely to work better together and why some

staff may need additional support in certain areas. As a result, children receive high-quality care.

The manager has also sought additional training from providers outside of the organisation, including free university courses and a specialist to help to develop staff's knowledge on the sensory needs of children with autism spectrum disorder. Consequently, staff have a more in-depth understanding, which means that they are better skilled to care for the children living at the home.

The manager is very supportive of the team. When staff have had to work to cover shortfalls on the rota, the manager has also undertaken some shifts to help out. As a result, the staff see her as a positive leader and role model.

Staff say they feel well supported by the manager. Staff receive regular reflective supervision and are encouraged to develop themselves by undertaking additional learning and research. As a result, staff feel valued and respected.

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: SC020602

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Keys NHCC Limited

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

Responsible individual: Christine Bird

Registered manager: Louise Constable

Inspector

Debbie Bond, Social Care Inspector

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