

SC026991

Registered provider: Keys Childcare Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is run and managed by an established private provider. It is registered to provide care and support for up to four young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 20 to 21 April 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

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

Date of last inspection: 9 November 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: Improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because

- Children make progress across their lives from their individual starting points. Where there are barriers to positive outcomes, staff actively seek to challenge and work in partnership with other agencies to overcome them. Staff have a strong understanding of children's needs and work collaboratively to support them to achieve. Feedback from professionals and families confirm the positive

impact the home has on children's outcomes.

- Children are supported to make successful transitions to semi-independence. Staff continue to support children once they move, as part of the planning process. Staff persevere to maintain positive relationships with young people who experience anxiety in the period prior to leaving the home to ensure that endings are positive.
- Children are encouraged to participate in a broad range of activities which reflect their interests and needs. This recognises their diversity and encourages community participation.
- Key working has increased in frequency and records reflect how this responds to daily progress and challenges experienced by children.
- Children have an active role and participate in making improvements to the home and ways in which their achievements are rewarded, which engages them to make progress.
- Children say they feel safe and know that staff will listen and support them with their worries and concerns. There are robust systems in place to respond to risk and clear collaborative partnerships with external agencies to support children's well-being and safety.
- The home is staffed by a committed, stable team who are led by a manager who has high aspirations for children who live there.
- Effective supervision and training ensure that practice is monitored to maintain high standards of care and to support career development.

The children's home's areas for development

- Staff should improve recording in some areas to ensure that they accurately reflect staff's actions to monitor and respond to children's welfare.
- The home should evidence that it challenges placing authorities more robustly when relevant plans are not provided in a timely manner.
- Monitoring of care in the home should include the input of children's families to provide a more holistic review.
- Any errors in recording of medications should indicate the author of the alterations.
- Routine maintenance of the home and grounds, particularly to make boundaries secure, must be completed.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/11/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
18/05/2016	Full	Requires improvement
10/09/2015	Full	Requires improvement
15/07/2015	Full	Inadequate

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 health and well-being standard is that— children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. (Regulation 10(1)(c)). Particularly, that staff support healthy routines for children who may be experiencing mental health issues, and record how they do so.	26/05/2017
The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. (Regulation 23 (1)). This refers to any errors in recording being appropriately signed by the author.	26/05/2017
If the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, they should challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to ensure that the child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5(c)) This is with particular reference to challenging and escalating concerns where current relevant plans are not provided in a timely manner.	26/05/2017
The registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing, and evaluating the quality of care provided for children. This system must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (5))	26/05/2017
The registered person must compile, in relation to the children's home, a statement ('the statement of purpose') which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. (Regulation 16 (1), Schedule 1: 20). This relates to arrangements for the professional supervision of therapists.	26/05/2017

Recommendations

- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Records should include sufficient detail to enable the reader to identify what staff do to monitor and support young people's well-being.
- Provide a nurturing environment that is welcoming and supportive. Homes must also meet children's basic day-to-day needs and physical necessities. Staff should seek to meet the child's basic needs in the way that a good parent would, recognising that many children in residential care have experienced environments where these needs have not been consistently met – doing so is an important aspect of demonstrating that the staff care for the child and value them as an individual. This relates specifically to the maintenance of the garden, including replacement of fence panels through which a child has gone missing from the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.7)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

From their individual starting points, children make and sustain positive progress across most aspects of their lives, in line with their individual needs and abilities. One social worker said that the difference the home has made for a child is 'like the difference between night and day' in terms of his positive progress. This demonstrates the depth of knowledge that staff have about children in their care and the individualised response to their needs. Children experience security from established relationships with staff, consistent boundaries and enduring placements.

Children say that they get on with all the staff and, when asked why, one stated, 'they care, and look after us like parents'. A social worker observed nurturing interactions between a child and staff members, even though the child does not identify them as particular individuals he would seek out for this attention. During the inspection, children were observed having fun during a table-tennis tournament with staff and enjoying light-hearted, competitive interactions. One child shared a joke with the inspector, with staff explaining that this is a daily feature as he has a joke book. A member of staff spoke of how playfulness is encouraged in various ways to reflect children's individuality and level of functioning, such as being encouraged to enjoy mask-making at external events, and to make fun videos reflecting their interest in particular comic styles. For children who have lived at the home for a long time, staff talk about how their activities have reflected their development and growing maturity, introducing a range of experiences, including going to see their favourite bands. Children, therefore, access opportunities as expected of their peers who are not looked after.

Most children make good progress in education and, where they are not engaging or achieving as expected, the home actively seeks to address issues in partnership with social workers. One social worker said she was 'proud to be associated with the home'

and how they work together to support and advocate for a child regarding his education. There is a joint commitment to maximise the child's academic potential and to seek alternative provision that is better able to meet his needs. Children's social and diversity needs are encouraged well through access to community groups and through open discussions in direct work. This enables them to access supportive networks, develop friendships within the local community and to encourage social interaction.

Children's health needs are promoted through encouragement to attend appointments, incentives to work on particular health needs, such as oral hygiene, and in key work sessions to support their understanding of the impact of puberty and sexual health. Some children access therapy to support their emotional well-being and understanding of previous life experiences. Staff are mindful that some children are less likely to share their inner feelings and monitor mood changes. A referral to the child and adolescent mental health service has been made for one child, who does not access therapy, to ensure that his mental health needs are met. However, the team does not always fully record what efforts they make to encourage a healthy lifestyle to support his emotional health, particularly during holidays, when he might be reluctant to get up and participate in activities. There are some minor errors in medication records which require attention, but do not impact on children's welfare.

Children are encouraged to make suggestions about improvements to the home through weekly meetings and via 'Operation Sparkle'. They are encouraged to discuss their own behaviours, and make suggestions for new 'positive boxes' to reward them when they are doing well. An advocacy service visits the home monthly to encourage children's participation further, and, where required, individual advocates are accessed to ensure that children's voices are heard. There is ongoing and regular communication with external agencies and those who are important in the children's lives. Therapists provide consultation to staff to support their understanding and develop strategies to help young people. Social workers state that they all now receive communication at the frequency requested and that the home is also good at involving family members in children's care. They are confident in the home's ability to promote contact with family members, as well as friends who live further away from the home. Parents report that they are happy with the progress that their children make at the home.

One young person has now moved from the home to semi-independence. A delay between being told and the placing authority's identification of an appropriate provision caused the young person considerable anxiety, which resulted in a negative impact on his behaviour. However, staff had an excellent understanding of his underlying emotional state and persevered to maintain a positive approach. The home was persistent in pressing the placing authority for a planning decision. Once the young person was told of plans in place, he was able to enjoy the rest of his time at the home and rebuild relationships to be able to access hugs and reassurance about his future. He also enjoyed a leaving party with the other young people. He continues to have support from staff as part of his transition in his new accommodation, demonstrating the efforts of staff to promote a positive outcome. Prior to his move, the young person was encouraged in the development of independent living skills through a programme used in the home. Other young people are also supported in developing these skills at a pace suited to their needs, as they move towards their transition to independence.

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

Young people say that they feel safe living at the home. Staff have a good understanding of areas of risk through comprehensive assessments, which are complemented by informative behaviour management plans. These identify potential triggers and guide staff in how to defuse potential incidents. Risk assessments, including individual plans for going missing from the home and self-injury, are regularly reviewed and updated in response to any incident, so that staff can promote young people's safety.

Children do not regularly go missing from the home; however, if they do, staff do all that they can to locate the child and follow the home's plans. Relevant parties are informed and, when children return, staff ensure that they are well and care for them. One child informed staff that he had stolen and consumed alcohol whilst away from the home. Staff sought medical advice and monitored him throughout the night to ensure he was safe. Key work is undertaken to educate children on the risks of alcohol use, and of the risk of criminalisation from stealing. Children are encouraged to take restorative action, for example by writing letters of apology and paying for stolen items. A social worker reported that he is able to hold meetings with staff from the home and the child's therapist to jointly risk assess circumstances which might increase the risk of missing episodes, and ensure that they are minimised.

The home has particularly strong and effective partnerships with local agencies to reduce risks to young people. A consistent worker from Catch-22, the agency that undertakes independent return interviews after any missing episode, visits regularly to maintain positive relationships with children who live there. She reports that the home communicates well, follows all protocols, and will always seek information about any relevant training the service provides. Likewise, the designated police officer reports that she visits the home at least fortnightly and that communication is effective. The home proactively seeks her input regarding new admissions and responds positively to her challenge and suggestions. The manager is pursuing specialist training in restorative justice, which the police officer recently attended and found useful. One member of staff did complain to the police following a serious assault by a child. She was reluctant to do so, and was relieved when the matter could be dealt with via community reparation. This collaborative approach and transparent communication promotes children's safety and reduces the risk of them being criminalised.

One child experienced bullying from another, which was managed robustly by staff. Records show immediate challenge of verbal bullying, and the victim was encouraged to make a formal complaint, which led to a meeting between the two children. The victim felt supported by the staff and recorded that he thought the meeting was good in resolving the conflict. In addition, a meeting was held with both children's social workers to ensure that plans were implemented to prevent further bullying. The social worker for the child who had been bullied felt that the home dealt with the issue well, and was confident that staff were protective. The response of the staff meant that the child felt supported and protected.

The home provides a 1:1 ratio to ensure appropriate supervision, where this is

necessary. However, as children make progress, opportunities to have time away from the home unaccompanied are introduced and monitored to support their developing independence. The home uses incentives to promote positive behaviour, which are planned with the child to promote their active engagement; however, these are reviewed so that, if a child has difficulty in achieving outcomes, they can be modified to support the child's attainment. Records show that positive consequences are used regularly, for example, to reinforce achievements or to recognise when children are helpful or show kindness. When negative consequences are used, these are proportionate and creative in order to teach young people values, such as using public transport after using expletives about people who commute by bus. Physical intervention is used as a last resort to manage behaviour that may cause harm to the child or others. Records are comprehensive, including how staff try to de-escalate situations prior to the use of restraint, with good managerial oversight to ensure that they are proportionate and necessary. Young people and staff are debriefed following any interventions.

Children do complain about the poor wi-fi signal at the home, which cannot currently be improved due to local service provision. However, children can visit locations so that they are able to access wi-fi. Staff monitor electronic devices well and promptly report any concerning information to relevant safeguarding agencies. One investigation is ongoing, and staff maintain a risk assessment for that child with regard to potential sexual exploitation until its full conclusion, despite initial police feedback that there are no immediate concerns.

The home is generally well maintained, and any repairs are made immediately in the event of any property damage. However, programmed general repairs are sometimes delayed as a result, which means that garden maintenance has not been completed. This includes fence panels through which a child has gone missing on one occasion and, therefore, need attention.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is led by a strong, nurturing and experienced registered manager who is currently updating her management qualification to level 5. She is supported by the assistant manager and, together, they work well to provide effective leadership to a stable staff team. They instil in the team a shared ambition to provide high-quality care, which promotes positive outcomes for children, and there is a clear commitment to ongoing improvement throughout the home. Individual staff members identify where improvements can be made and are keen to put forward suggestions and advocate for children. They report feeling well supported by leaders and welcome the opportunity to hold responsibility for key areas to support children's development. Such delegation encourages shared responsibility in the home and opportunities to develop skills in specific areas. One member of staff has recently been promoted as a result and, while she will be missed by staff and children due to relocation to another home, she hopes to maintain contact through working occasional shifts.

Staff report that they benefit from a range of training, which varies from online programmes to face-to-face delivery from internal trainers and external providers. Unqualified staff are enrolled on an appropriate qualification, with progress tracked through supervision. One member of staff found that training in autistic spectrum

disorder to meet the needs of a particular child has benefited his practice with another child, in understanding the child's need to process events, and being aware of the appropriate timing to address issues. In addition to formal reflective supervision, staff report that leaders are available for informal practice discussion. Formal supervision involves discussion about children and, particularly for key workers, focuses on a particular child's needs. Staff say that the manager is nurturing of the staff team and that, 'regardless of what happens', creates a stable environment because she has a good understanding. A social worker confirmed this also, stating that even if there are issues occurring during her visit, the team maintains a calm atmosphere in the home. Staff are able to reflect honestly on their own learning needs to access additional support or training. Particular areas for development are also brought to team meetings for discussion, with the opportunity to share ideas as a team in responding to children's needs.

The manager has a very clear understanding of children's progress, with a focus on future attainment. Progress is monitored and summarised over a number of domains on a monthly basis, which provides a focus on the next steps to achieve goals, including appropriate incentives. Where possible, such planning involves family members, to enable a consistent message for children about expectations. Ongoing internal monthly monitoring and the home's development plan identify and drive forward improvements in the home, although this requires the inclusion of families' views to provide a holistic assessment of the quality of care. The manager uses external monitoring effectively to support improvements, and this is evidenced in practice, for example in the increase in recording of key work undertaken with children. Staff work collaboratively to improve the young people's experiences in the home in line with the home's aims and objectives. However, the statement of purpose does not currently reflect details regarding supervision of specialist staff external to the home.

Recording is generally clear and provides up-to-date pictures of young people's lives. However, on some occasions, staff do not provide complete details of actions taken, for example in recording times of checks during the night to monitor children's welfare. Key working sessions are frequent and, alongside children's meetings and records, reflect their daily experiences and challenges. There is good managerial oversight of records and, where necessary, staff are provided with additional guidance on practice to prevent incidents reoccurring. The organisation is currently reviewing all paperwork to streamline documents. This will be beneficial to the home as there is currently considerable overlap and repetition between documents, which not only increases the potential for error, but also takes up additional staff time.

Good relationships with therapists, social workers, education and other professionals are maintained. There is clear challenge of other agencies, such as schools, where the home feels that children's needs are not being met. The manager is robust in her challenge, even where the school may be part of the same organisation. In her words, '[the child] always comes first, that is my priority.' The home is persistent in requesting up-to-date relevant plans from placing authorities when these are not received in a timely manner; however, further evidence is required regarding how the home escalates concerns when there is a poor response. Despite requests, one social worker had not provided an up-to-date care plan following a child's review. She advised the inspector that she did not routinely do so, but ensured that this was sent to the home following discussion of her

responsibilities and the need for the home to be able to demonstrate compliance with placing authorities' plans. This did not significantly impact on the child's day-to-day care due to the staff's knowledge of his needs.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC026991

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Keys Childcare Ltd

Registered provider address: Hurstwood Court, New Hall Hey Road, Rossendale BB4 6HR

Responsible individual: Julie Hamilton

Registered manager: Wendy Birtwistle

Inspector

Karen Willson, social care regulatory inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2017