

SC374268

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This home cares for children aged between 10 and 18 who have a variety of complex needs and require specialist support.

The manager is registered and has been in her position since April 2020.

Visit dates: 3 to 4 November 2020

Previous inspection date: 21 August 2019

Previous inspection judgement: Requires improvement to be 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

Staff and children have good relationships. Staff enjoy spending time with the children. This has led to some strong bonds developing between children and staff. Staff persevere when children's behaviour is challenging, because they understand the underlying, often emotionally charged, causes.

The manager and staff have worked creatively to help a child to move into the home. Given the COVID-19 restrictions, the move had to be completed using technology and imaginatively ways to help the child move to the home in a positive manner. The manager ensured that staff had the right information to provide good-quality care and safeguard the child. As a result, this move has been a success.

Children have continued to be supported to make progress in their education, despite all the challenges faced by COVID-19. Children attend either mainstream school or alternative education provision. The manager and staff understand the crucial importance of education for children's futures; consequently, children's school attendance is good. Staff support children to complete coursework and promote the reading of books. This helps children develop educationally and promotes a culture in the home of positive educational attainment.

Children enjoy a comfortable and relaxed home environment. They have plenty of age-appropriate toys. Children's bedrooms are comfortable, decorated to a good standard and equipped to meet their individual needs. This helps children both enjoy and be proud of their home.

The safety of children

The manager ensures that procedures for safeguarding children are strictly followed. When concerns arise, the manager ensures that the appropriate agencies are notified immediately. The manager makes certain that there is a transparent multi-agency response to concerns, such as when allegations are made against staff. When the behaviour of staff has fallen below expected standards, the appropriate action is taken by the manager. This prompt action helps to keep children safe.

Children have been restrained by staff to ensure that children and others are safe during these difficult incidents. Staff undertake restraint only as a last resort. The manager ensures good oversight of all incidents. She makes certain that the children and staff involved receive a thorough debrief following any incidents. The manager completes her own analysis of incidents to assure herself that these have been managed appropriately and to learn any lessons. Overall, incidents of physical intervention are decreasing; this reflects an increasingly settled home.

Some children who have previously been at risk of going missing from home and exploitation have desisted from this behaviour. This reflects children feeling safer and well supported by staff.

The staff and manager complete thorough risk assessments. These assessments accurately reflect children's changing needs, risks and vulnerabilities. This helps staff to take the right action to keep children safe.

Staff and the manager have ensured that compliance with government guidance in relation to COVID-19 has been maintained. There are good hygiene protocols, and visitors must complete questionnaires for track and trace. Safe distancing is practised, and staff are educating children as to the importance of sticking to the official guidance.

Leaders and managers

The manager is committed, knowledgeable and dedicated. She has worked at the home for a considerable period of time before she was promoted to the home's manager. She possesses a detailed knowledge of each child's background, their needs, risks and vulnerabilities. The manager is a strong advocate for the children, making certain their rights and entitlements are upheld.

The manager has made good progress in meeting the requirements and recommendations from the last inspection. She has ensured that staff have the knowledge and skills to meet the safeguarding needs of children. This has been achieved through a combination of training, regular supervision and reflective team meetings.

Staff report to feeling well supported. They say the manager is always available to them. They receive regular supervision and feel they can raise any issues or concerns with the manager. They feel valued, and this has contributed to good morale among the team.

A real strength of the manager and staff is their multi-agency working. Professionals state that the manager ensures that there is very good communication, often daily. The manager and staff work to agreed plans. This ensures that efforts to support children are well coordinated so that the plan is followed in detail. Children are therefore settled and making good progress.

The manager has a good grasp of strengths and weaknesses. She uses, to good effect, a range of tools to quality-assure care practice, including monthly audits across a range of areas to identify patterns and trends. She uses this information with staff to constantly evaluate the effectiveness of approaches to care and how areas can be improved.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC374268

Registered provider: Keys Care Ltd

Registered provider address: c/o Pinsent Masons LLP, The Soloist Building, 1 Lanyon Place, Belfast, Northern Ireland BT1 3LP

Responsible individual: Dale Berry

Registered manager: Natalie Thompson

Inspector

Phillip Morris, Social Care Inspector

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