

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC386502
Inspector	Sharon Lloyd
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Keys Education Limited
Registered person address	Hurstwood Court, Laganwood House New Hall Hey Road ROSSENDALE Lancashire BB4 6HR
Responsible individual	Marc Murphy
Registered manager	POST VACANT
Date of last inspection	31/01/2014

Inspection date	13/05/2014
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Previous inspection	inadequate progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	adequate
Outcomes for children and young people	adequate
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	adequate

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	adequate
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The leadership and management of the home are adequate. A new manager has been appointed to the home and is in the process of submitting an application for registration to Ofsted. Children, parents and staff are pleased with the changes she has introduced and feel the home is more relaxed and child-focused.

An improved training programme supports staff to develop the skills they need to provide good quality care for children. This includes skills in working with children at risk of sexual exploitation and in safe internet use. Plans are in place for this training to be rolled out to all staff. There is evidence of better safeguarding as a result of this training.

Staff receive regular, timely supervision. However, the quality of staff supervision is variable and some staff have felt unsupported and have lacked the knowledge needed to complete allocated tasks.

The home is comfortably furnished and provides homely, pleasant accommodation. Children welcome the recent addition of a play room where they enjoy playing pool and electronic games with staff.

A high staff turnover in 2013 has undermined some children's stability and progress.

The staff team is now more settled. Children are learning to trust newer members of staff and the consistency of care has improved.

Outcomes for children are adequate overall. Children make satisfactory progress in their development. Their health is promoted and they learn to lead healthy lives although some continue to smoke. Children develop improved social skills and reduce their anti-social behaviour. Education outcomes are varied but all make progress from their starting points. Some children without an education placement are supported by staff during the school day because the local authority does not provide a tutor.

The quality of care is good. Children know and feel that staff care about them. They receive good levels of support that promotes improving outcomes. Placement plans are detailed and fully address children's known needs. Personal education plans are not held on all files despite repeated requests to placing authorities for this information. This undermines the home's ability to demonstrate it is supporting all children's assessed educational needs.

The quality of safeguarding is good. Staff know how to protect children and take action to do so. Children feel safe in the home. Good routines and checks ensure the home provides a safe environment. Not all staff are fully familiar with children's individual risk assessments. No negative impact of this has been seen but potentially it undermines the home's ability to keep children safe.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home is privately operated. The home is registered for three young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
31/01/2014	Interim	inadequate progress
25/10/2013	Full	adequate
29/01/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
11/10/2012	Full	good

What does the children's home need to do to improve further?

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that the system for recruiting temporary staff includes an effective system for reaching decisions as to who is to be appointed or refused. In particular, demonstrate that any previously raised concerns about their practice and suitability are robustly explored and taken into account (NMS 16.5)
- ensure that the result of all reviews of placement and education plans are recorded on the child's file. In particular, continue to pursue personal education plans from placing authorities (NMS 25.8)
- ensure that staff advocate for children to help overcome problems with their education. In particular, advocate with responsible authorities to ensure children receive the education to which they are entitled (NMS 8.8)
- ensure that staff are easily able to access the advice needed to provide a comprehensive service for children and young people. In particular, ensure that staff fully understand the role of the key worker and that new staff receive high quality support to develop their skills (NMS 19.7)

- promote the welfare of children by ensuring that staff are familiar with risk assessments relating to individual children (NMS 4.2)
- ensure that information about the children is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to them when they access their files now or in the future. (22.5)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **adequate**

Children live healthy lives. They receive the treatment and medicines they need and this promotes and improves their overall health. They benefit from a balanced diet and good bedtime routines so they get the nutrition and sleep they need for growth and development. Some young people continue to smoke and this undermines their otherwise good health.

Through positive relationships with staff and clear boundaries, children develop self-esteem and interpersonal skills over time. This enables them to interact better with peers and members of the community and they become increasingly confident and resilient.

Children make good progress from their starting points. For example, children significantly reduce their anti-social behaviour and criminality and this improves their life chances. A parent commented, '(Name) was getting into trouble all the time before going there. (Name) is much better now and safer'.

Engagement with education is variable. Some children have very good school attendance and achievement. Teachers say they have a more positive attitude to learning and improved achievement across a range of subjects. This increases their future life chances.

Other children have had long periods of absence from school before moving to the home. Re-engagement with education is, for them, a lengthy process. Some receive limited tutoring before starting part-time at a new school. Others have no tutoring for several weeks. This means they fall further behind with their education. With encouragement and support from staff, these children access educational websites and develop skills such as cooking during the school morning. This provides them with some structure to their day and promotes learning and life skills.

Children maintain good levels of contact with their families by phone and regular visits home. They recognise that their relationships with family members improve in line with their improving outcomes. Families who visit children at the home report they feel welcome and included in their child's life.

Children contribute to decision-making about their own lives and about the running of the home. They know and understand their placement plans. They meet with their key-workers regularly to discuss issues of concern to them as individuals. They influence the day-to-day life of the home through weekly group meetings and on-going, informal, daily consultation. They choose how to spend their time, influence where to go on holiday, contribute to menu-planning and to the choice of décor

within the home. This promotes a sense of belonging.

Quality of care

good

The home promotes the development of supportive relationships with children. Children feel that all the staff listen to them and care about them. They say that staff are 'nice people'.

Staff follow comprehensive placement plans that guide them in how to look after individual children. These plans are based on children's individual care plans. Children contribute to the development of their own plan. Strategies are put in place to help children develop skills and improve their behaviour in accordance with their plans. This means that staff and children know what they are aiming for and know how to achieve it.

Children say they have no complaints and are well looked after at the home by staff who care about them. They know how to make a complaint and are confident it will be addressed. One complaint made since the last inspection was fully and promptly investigated. It was resolved to the satisfaction of the child.

The home provides children with access to activities and facilities in accordance with their individual needs, wishes and plans. This means children have the opportunity to follow their own interests and meet up with peers at organised social settings. For example, children can participate in youth clubs and local football teams.

Teachers report that staff support children's education well. Staff attend parents' evenings and maintain good communication with teachers on a daily basis. This ensures that any barriers to learning are quickly identified and resolved. The home makes valuable contributions to each child's personal education plan and this supports children to access and receive an individually tailored education programme. Although the home positively addresses challenges to educational placements, it has not been successful in securing temporary education for children without a school placement. This means that some children's educational progress is limited.

The home is well maintained and comfortably furnished. Children are pleased with the recent addition of a play room where they enjoy playing pool and electronic games. Children enjoy playing in the large garden where there is plenty of space for ball games as well as a trampoline. Children confirm they are happy with their bedrooms and beds are comfortable. Where necessary, mattresses have been replaced since the last inspection.

The location assessment of the home identifies a number of strengths and challenges

associated with the local area. The home uses this information to inform the operation of the home. For example, it successfully protects children from involvement in anti-social behaviour by facilitating children's engagement with the community away from the home's immediate environment.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Children report they are safe and feel safe in the home. Staff are familiar with child protection procedures and have access to good advice and procedural guidance. This means they know how to protect children when they are at risk of harm or make a disclosure or allegation of abuse.

Individualised risk assessments are kept up-to-date and inform the placement plan. These are based on known risks to a child's welfare and safety. Although these are regularly shared with staff, not all staff are fully familiar with them. This means there is a risk of important plans not being effectively followed and this risks children's safety. There has been no impact of this shortfall on children's safety to date.

Staff follow good procedures to safeguard children who go missing. However, no children have been missing since before the last inspection. The current group of children have never been missing from this home.

The home has developed and maintains a very good working relationship with the local Police Community Support Officer who visits and provides advice to staff and children on a regular and frequent basis. This promotes children's safety and discourages anti-social behaviour.

The home maintains strong and proactive links with the police public protection unit and the local children's services safeguarding team. It appropriately refers any concerns for children's safety and welfare to the relevant agencies. Children benefit from this multi-agency approach to safeguarding as their safety is prioritised by all agencies.

Staff employ a mixture of sanctions and rewards that promote positive behaviour. There is increasingly a greater emphasis on rewards and a reduction in the use of sanctions. This is in line with a greater focus on creating a nurturing environment. It is too early to assess the impact of this change. Restraint is used infrequently and only to prevent serious harm or damage. All staff are suitably trained to restrain children safely.

Bullying is consistently and constructively addressed so that over time, it reduces. This enables children who bully to develop new and more acceptable interpersonal skills. It protects children and staff from the fear of bullying.

Staff records demonstrate robust recruitment procedures. However, there are

shortfalls in the revised arrangements for checking the suitability of staff transferring from other homes within the organisation. This means that the manager does not have all the information she needs to assess the suitability of staff transferring into the home.

Routine health and safety checks ensure the home provides a safe and secure environment.

Leadership and management

adequate

The registered manager left in April 2014. A new manager shadowed the registered manager for two weeks before taking up post on 28 April 2014. This ensured a smooth transition for staff and children. The new manager is suitably experienced and has almost completed the required Level 5 Diploma. She stated her intention to submit an application for registration to HMCI within 28 days of taking up post. The new manager knows the home's strengths and areas for development.

The children, staff and parents welcome the changes to both the organisation and fabric of the home, introduced by the new manager. They all report that the home feels more relaxed. The children said that she is the best thing about this home and that she takes notice of their views and wishes. Children and staff appreciate her open-door management style and nurturing approach. They feel their views are important and they can influence improvements.

The home has taken appropriate action to address the requirement and most of the recommendations made following the last inspection. This demonstrates the home has capacity to improve.

A recommendation to implement rigorous staff transfer checks and procedures has not been adequately met, as shortfalls remain. Information about staff who are temporarily assigned to the home is insufficiently robust and on occasion, has been unreliable. This means that the manager's decision about the suitability of the staff member has been based on incomplete information. Although the impact of this shortfall has been negligible, it is a potential threat to the safety of children and the member of staff.

Unannounced visits are made each month by an independent person who scrutinises and reports on the management of the home and the quality of care. The quality of the reports varies but all are sufficiently informative and evaluative. They highlight both good practice and areas for development. The home addresses any shortfalls in practice raised, which drives improvement in the quality of care.

Staff receive one-to-one supervision regularly. The quality of the supervision has been variable. Some new staff have lacked confidence and have received only adequate support to develop their skills. This has undermined their ability to work as

effectively as possible with children. For example, new staff assigned to the role of key worker are not clear about the duties of a key worker. As a result, they have not fully grasped their responsibility to advocate with placing authorities for those children not in education. The manager is addressing this matter.

The staff training programme has been developed. Since the last inspection, a number of staff have received training in on-line safety and supporting children at risk of sexual exploitation. Staff have shared the learning at the staff meeting. This has embedded their knowledge and has helped raised awareness of risks to children's safety among the staff team. Staff protect children through focused key worker sessions and strengthened internet safety measures. Further training to meet the particular emotional and psychological needs of children in placement is planned in the near future.

A high staff turnover in 2013 has undermined the formation of attachments between children and staff. This has impeded some children's progress. Staff say they are now more settled as a team and are keen to work with the new manager to foster a more nurturing and supportive environment for children and staff. Newer staff are fully integrated into the team and this promotes consistency of care for children.

Staff work pro-actively with other professionals and agencies to secure positive outcomes for children. Professionals and parents speak highly of the quality of care and effectiveness of communication. The home follows up overdue reports such as Personal Education Plans with placing authority social workers and team managers. Despite this, some placing authorities are slow to provide the home with the information they need to ensure that individually tailored placement plans effectively address children's educational needs. Without this, the home cannot demonstrate it is fully addressing children's identified needs.

The home's records and individual children's files are mostly well kept. However, some recording is insufficiently detailed and some documentation is undated or unsigned. This does not impact on the quality of care to children but it does make it difficult for the manager to monitor the operation of the home. It does not provide a clear and accurate picture for any individual wishing to review their records in years to come.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.