

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC386505
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 Joseph Murphy
Registered manager	Michael Paul Merrison
Date of last inspection	27/08/2014

Inspection date	05/03/2015
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Previous inspection	declined in effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	adequate
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Outcomes for children are adequate. Some children have excellent attendance at school and make good progress in their education; others struggle to engage in education and their attendance needs improvement. The home supports children to engage in education but does not ensure that every child receives the education to which they are entitled.

Most children partake of the healthy diet offered and enjoy engagement in physical activity and a range of leisure pursuits. Despite advice from staff and specialist advisors from support agencies, they continue to smoke cigarettes and to misuse substances. Children improve their self-care skills and over time, develop independence skills that prepare them for adult life.

With effective support from the home, children maintain or re-establish contact with families and this promotes better prospects for their future emotional stability. Most children who need therapy receive it but this is not always delivered in the most suitable environment and this does not ensure children benefit from it fully.

The quality of care is adequate. Children feel they are well cared for by staff with whom they interact well. They enjoy a nurturing environment and friendly banter with staff. They respond to positive behaviour management strategies that focus on

providing incentives and rewarding good behaviour. Boundaries are clear. Restraint is used infrequently and appropriately to protect children and others from harm.

Children feel safe in the home. Those who go missing are protected in line with locally agreed protocols. Staff actively search for them, work closely with the police, families and other agencies and welcome children back on their return. They conduct return to placement interviews and arrange interviews with an independent person in an attempt to ascertain why and where the child was missing. Few children go missing and those that do mostly return of their own accord.

Staff know how to protect children who make a disclosure or allegation of abuse. There have been no allegations made or concerns raised about the home. They work well with the local police and other agencies and this promotes children's safety and well-being.

Other professionals report the home has 'excellent communication' with them and supports children well.

Routine health and safety checks protect children in the home. Children and staff participate in regular fire drills but records of drills need improvement. Individual risk assessments guide staff to manage risks associated with children's individual behaviour and circumstances. These lack detail and do not recognise the level of risk associated with going missing from care for some children. They do not always take the child's history into account. Consequently, behaviour management plans are not always robust and children's safety needs are not always recognised and fully promoted.

The leadership and management of the home are adequate. The manager became registered with Ofsted in September 2014. He has not been well supervised in his role. He routinely monitors and reports on the operation of the home to an adequate standard. Gaps in these reports mean that some aspects of care and children's progress are not evaluated. Most, but not all records are well maintained. There are sometimes delays in addressing matters raised by the independent visitor following quality assurance visits to the home.

Staff report they are well supported and supervised. Most are very experienced, suitably qualified and adequately trained. Most have not been trained to meet the specific needs of children living at the home.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This service is a private children's home, registered to care for up to three children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/08/2014	Interim	declined in effectiveness
05/02/2014	Full	outstanding
31/07/2013	Interim	good progress
05/03/2013	Full	good

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed by the registered person receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal. In particular, ensure that the manager is regularly supervised and that staff are trained to meet the needs of the children accommodated (Regulation 27 (4)(a))	30/04/2015
11 (2001)	promote and make proper provision for the safeguarding and welfare of children accommodated. In particular, ensure individual risk assessments address children's known risk-taking behaviour and the potential for harm to the child and others. (Regulation 11 (1))	30/04/2015

Recommendations

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

- ensure children's emotional and mental health needs are promoted. In particular, review the arrangements for providing therapy sessions with other professionals within the home (NMS 6.1)
- ensure that children have access to appropriate education and training in order to support them to resume full time education (NMS 8.8)
- ensure that the manager regularly monitors all records to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. In particular ensure that monitoring reports review serious incidents and any barriers to children's progress such as their engagement and attainment in education (NMS 21.2)
- ensure the home has and implements a written policy that clarifies the purpose, format and content of information to be kept on files and that staff understand and follow the home's policy for the keeping and retention of files. In particular, ensure that incidents are recorded in the incident log, in line with the home's policy and that repairs are made to bound log books so that information is not lost (NMS 22.1)
- ensure prompt action is taken to address any issues of concern that independent visitors to the home identify. (NMS 21.9)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **adequate**

The home is a national resource and looks after children who cannot live in their own home authorities for safety reasons. Three children have left the home since the last inspection and three more children have been admitted. The home supported those who have left to make successful transitions to their new placements.

Children's progress and development is mixed. Some children have 100% attendance at school and make good educational progress, others attend less regularly and make slow or, in some cases, negligible educational progress despite encouragement from the home. In most cases there is an improvement on their educational engagement at previous placements.

Children enjoy a range of leisure activities and outings with staff and this helps them to develop new interests, skills and confidence. They particularly enjoy playing electronic games with staff and each other. This helps them to engage in healthy competition and to win or take defeat amicably. They enjoy regular theme nights where they learn about and sample foods from different cultures.

Children develop life skills that help to prepare them for future independence. They improve their personal care and they learn to keep their bedrooms clean and tidy. They learn basic household chores, including cooking and washing and they know how to use public transport.

Children benefit from a nurturing environment and staff go the extra mile to make sure they are comfortable and well supported. Staff provide children with many opportunities to talk about matters that concern them so that children have a say in their day to day lives and in their future plans. They maintain and re-establish their relationships with family and people who are important to them. Social workers appreciate how influential the home is in rebuilding relationships between children and their families. They recognise staffs ability to 'maintain a professional distance when dealing with complex family dynamics'.

Children have a healthy diet and receive ample amounts of nutritious and varied food. They learn appropriate table manners and most enjoy the relaxed, social interaction of taking meals together with staff at the dining table. Most children enjoy physical activity such as attending the gym, playing football and cycling and they benefit from encouragement from staff to develop their skills and stamina.

Children know how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and are aware of the dangers associated with smoking and substance abuse. However, they continue to smoke cigarettes and are reluctant to give up, despite encouragement from staff. Some children smoke cannabis and quickly establish links with local suppliers of illicit

substances and 'legal highs'. They place their health and safety at risk by misusing substances in the community, including when on home contact. This behaviour is long-standing. Some children have recently refrained from using legal high drugs as a result of a frightening experience which threatened their health and welfare. The home is proactive in supporting these children to engage in alternative, fun activities and in educating them to make safe choices when they revert to using drugs. Staff supervise children suspected to have taken drugs very closely and ensure they receive medical attention where needed.

Quality of care

adequate

Children enjoy positive interactions, friendly banter and time spent with staff who care about them. Over time, they develop positive, trusting relationships with staff and begin to share their worries, views and feelings.

The home provides clear and consistent boundaries and staff use positive measures of control, including incentives and rewards that encourage acceptable behaviour, engagement with education and a reduction in anti-social and risk-taking behaviour.

The staff team comprises both male and female staff of different ages. All staff are white caucasian. This does not reflect the make-up of the current group of children but staff work hard to make sure children's ethnic and cultural needs are well met. For example, they encourage children to make familiar dishes to share with other children and staff and they arrange for children to attend specialist hairdressers and use appropriate hair care products.

Staff listen to children's wishes and points of views and wherever possible take action to help children achieve their goals. Through frequent one to one discussions as well as regular group meetings, they help children to make positive changes in their lives and re-establish contact with their families. They help them to explore their feelings and encourage them to consider other viewpoints. They provide advice and guidance on matters such as the dangers of misusing substances such as 'legal highs,' sexual health, future employment and the importance of family.

Staff work proactively with other agencies and placing authorities. They share information appropriately so that those working with children have all the information they need to understand children's situations and provide the most suitable support. This promotes effective multi-agency working which places children's individual needs at the centre of the home's work. For example, children are offered support from the youth offending service, smoking cessation clinic, substance misuse team and police. Other agencies report that the home's 'communication is excellent'.

Staff encourage children to engage with specialist health workers, including therapists. The organisation provides access to therapy for children where needed, however, children are often reluctant to engage in therapy because of the distance to

the therapy centre which involves an hour's drive. Some children receive therapy in the home but this is not best practice as it takes place in the main lounge and children engaging in therapy cannot be assured that other children will not interrupt. This arrangement does not provide a safe environment away from their home where children can explore their feelings openly. Therapists provide advice and guidance to the staff team on the best way to support and manage the behaviour of children with highly complex emotional and behavioural needs. A therapist said, 'the home could not provide better support.'

Although some children have been referred to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, none have received a service since the last inspection, except in an emergency. One child who had to wait for a service from CAMHS refused to engage when it was offered. CAMHS agreed to provide advice for the staff team but the child left before it could be arranged. This meant the child's mental health needs were not well met in a timely manner.

The organisation has two schools and provides education for some children in line with their placement agreement. This is for those children who struggle to engage in education. This is not a successful arrangement and some placing authorities have been disappointed in the service provided which has not supported children's re-engagement with education. The key stage 4 school is over an hour's journey from the home during rush hour and children refuse to travel so far to school. As a result, some children do not receive education during the early weeks of their placement. Alternative arrangements include the provision of a teacher from a more local school who teaches english, mathematics and science to children, individually, in the lounge or dining room. Children in their GCSE years receive only two hours teaching each day. Some attend work placements or alternative education providers for part of the week but overall, they do not receive the education they are entitled to. The home has not challenged this barrier to children's education although it maintains close links with teachers and supports children to apply for college placements when they are dissatisfied with the arrangement.

Staff support children not having education to engage in educational activities during the school day. For example, they support children to practice mathematics, to watch educational DVDs, take them to places of interest, including museums and provide physical activity such as sessions at the gym.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

Children report that they feel safe in the home and that they are confident they can talk to a member of staff if they feel unsafe or worried. They recognise the good health and safety measures taken to keep them safe. They know and practice fire safety procedures. However, the record of fire drills does not list which children and staff have participated in the drill. This does not clearly demonstrate that all staff and children have practised and know what to do in the event of a fire.

All staff are trained to restrain children safely. The use of restraint is minimal. It is used appropriately and effectively to protect children and staff from harm.

There have been no allegations against staff and no reported child protection concerns. Staff are fully briefed and trained in whistle-blowing procedures and feel confident to report any concerns they might have about a colleague's practice. Staff know what to do in the event of a disclosure of abuse or allegation against staff and know where to access the names and numbers of senior managers and relevant safeguarding professionals.

The home has developed strong relationships with the police and the manager participates in local meetings where children's homes and police share information about safeguarding risks to children in care in the locality. The police community support officer is building a good relationship with the home and the children. He supports the home to deliver messages to children whose safety and welfare is compromised because of their risk-taking behaviour. The home appropriately shares pertinent information including risk assessments with the police missing from care co-ordinator. This helps the police to respond quickly when children go missing and to protect those children at high risk of harm.

The number of incidents of children going missing from care is extremely low. However, with the admission of new children to the home, including those who have a history of being missing from previous placements, there has been an increase in the number of missing from home incidents in recent weeks. The incidents mostly relate to a young person placed far from home. The home has taken action to promote the young person's swift and safe return, has worked effectively with the police and other agencies and has welcomed the young person back on their return. In most instances missing children have returned voluntarily to the home and have made their way back over long distances. This demonstrates they feel settled and well cared for in the home. Staff interview children on their return and although children are loath to share information about their whereabouts, staff are building up helpful information that assists in locating children faster when they do go missing.

Children report there is no bullying in the home. Staff are proactive in addressing suspected bullying. All children understand it is not tolerated and information about bullying and how to stop it is on display for children.

Children's risk assessments are not sufficiently individually focused and in some cases, do not reflect the actual risks for each child. This includes some risks associated with going absent without authority or missing from care or school. The risk assessments do not always provide staff with the level of guidance required to ensure risks to the safety and well-being of children and others are recognised and appropriately managed.

Leadership and management

adequate

A new manager took up post in July 2014 and was registered with Ofsted on 26 September 2014. This is his first management post and at the time of his appointment, he was new to this organisation. He has eight years' experience of working with children in social care settings, including at a senior level. He is suitably qualified in caring for children and young people and has a Level 5 Diploma in the Management of Care services. Staff and other professionals report he is a good and knowledgeable leader who has made a positive difference to the operation of the home.

The responsible individual has not ensured that the Registered Manager has been well supported since his appointment. The organisation's Director of Residential Services has provided extensive informal support but has conducted only two formal one-to-one supervision meetings with the Registered Manager. This means the Registered Manager has had limited opportunity for reflection on his decision-making and overall management of the home and he has not received appropriate levels of guidance or scrutiny of his performance from his line manager.

The responsible individual recognises the organisation has not provided the manager with the best possible support, advice and performance management and has taken steps to address this. A new tier of senior management has been created and a line manager has been appointed. He has already begun to influence improvements to practice. For example, he has provided improved paperwork that will enable more robust monitoring of the home. He has also provided advice to improve children's attendance at and engagement with education.

There have been gaps in the leadership team for almost six months. Staff have been unwilling to act up formally but have supported the manager informally and have taken on some additional duties. With an increased workload, the manager's oversight and monitoring of the operation of the home's records has not always been strong. For example, there have been delays in addressing some of the shortfalls identified as a result of independent quality assurance visits to the home. In particular, shortfalls in record keeping have not been addressed promptly. The impact of this on the care of children has been minimal but in the longer term, recording errors do not ensure the home has a good and reliable record of events in children's lives.

The manager completes a review of the quality of care every three months and shares his report with senior managers and Ofsted. Reports provide good statistical information to show that the matters required by Schedule 6 are monitored. For the most part, reports show good evaluation of children's progress and the operation of the home. However, some important information is missing. For example, there is minimal reflection on some safeguarding concerns such as children's substance misuse and information about children's education progress is not analytical. As a result, reports do not provide a fully comprehensive and reliable overview of the

home's performance and children's progress.

The two recommendations for good practice made at the last inspection have been partially addressed. Overall, the home's records have improved in quality. For example, some demonstrate effective consultation with children through key worker sessions and children's meetings. Significant conversations with individual children are recorded, demonstrating that staff address issues of concern regularly and frequently. The quality of these records is inconsistent and some lack detail about children's responses and views. The work staff do to support children not in school is better but not well recorded. It includes basic information about visits to places of interest and examples of mathematics work.

For the most part, records are clear and up to date. They are stored securely and provide a good overview of children's progress. However, some are not dated or signed. Some bound books are in a poor state of repair and a daily log book has pages missing. This means important information relating to children's experiences in the home is missing. Records of serious incidents such as fire setting are not always recorded in the incident log. This does not ensure effective oversight and monitoring of incidents by the Registered Manager. This shortfall was raised with the manager by the independent visitor, following his regular scrutiny of the home's performance.

The home is fully staffed, since the recent appointment of two new staff members. Children receive consistent care from a well-established, experienced team. Most staff are suitably qualified and very experienced in the care of children and young people with complex emotional and behavioural difficulties. New staff appreciate the good support provided by the Registered Manager and colleagues.

A rolling training programme provides staff with the basic skills they need to look after the children effectively and all staff, including the Registered Manager complete mandatory training. Not all staff have received specialist training that better equips them to meet the particular needs of children placed. For example, most have not been trained to understand and support children with attachment disorders, or those who display sexually harmful behaviour. This means behaviour management plans and risk assessments do not fully recognise and address children's complex and challenging needs. This does not promote the best possible care for all children.

Children's files are mostly well-kept. Individually tailored placement plans are succinct, written from the child's point of view and reflect each placing authority's plan for the child. The home is pro-active in seeking missing information such as statements of special educational needs and personal education plans. Health plans guide staff in the best way to meet children's health needs and medication records demonstrate children receive medication as prescribed.

A refurbishment programme is almost complete. The home provides welcoming, homely and comfortable accommodation. It is mostly well-maintained, clean and tidy. A new suite has been ordered for the lounge to further enhance children's comfort.

Bedrooms are personalised to reflect children's individual taste and style and damage is repaired quickly. The home is waiting for recently damaged wardrobe doors to be repaired. Children and staff are confident this will be attended too quickly. The stair carpet is worn and in need of replacement.

The Registered Manager has high aspirations for children and is promoting a better quality of care through better engagement in activities with children. He is providing regular feedback and advice to the staff team to improve the standard of recording. Staff report they feel well supported, more confident and empowered to make more effective contributions to children's placement plans.

The Statement of Purpose accurately reflects the operation of the home.

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.