

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC386505
Inspector	Sharon Lloyd
Type of inspection	Interim
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 / Michael Paul Merrison
Date of last inspection	05/02/2014

Inspection date	27/08/2014
Previous inspection	outstanding
Enforcement action since last inspection	There has been no enforcement action since the last inspection.

This inspection

This home was judged outstanding at the last full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has **declined in effectiveness**.

At the full inspection in February 2014, the home was seen to be delivering exceptionally high standards of care and making an outstanding contribution to young people's progress. The registered manager left the home in April 2014 and the new manager took up post on 7 July 2014. He is suitably qualified and experienced and has submitted an application for registration to HMCI. During the interim 12 weeks, the home was managed by a senior care worker with support from the registered manager of another home. There has been a dip in the quality of care provided by the home during this time.

Rigorous monitoring of the home's records by the appointed independent visitor during May and June 2014 identified shortfalls in the operation of the home including the maintenance and monitoring of records and the use of behaviour management strategies. This prompted a full audit of the home's records by the new manager and an assessment of practice over the last three months. The manager has clearly identified a dip in the quality of recording and in some areas of practice which have impacted on children to a small degree.

Records of children's meetings were not completed over several weeks and the manager reported that children were reluctant to engage in these discussions. This indicates that the level of consultation with children about their day to day lives and the operation of the home has declined. The manager has recently taken action to reinstate the meetings and to give children a voice in the development and running of the home.

Most communal areas are well-kept and comfortable. However, the home's maintenance programme had not kept up with the significant increase in damage resulting from challenging behaviour displayed by newly placed children. As a result,

the standard of décor and homeliness has declined. For example, the letter box in the front door is missing, the door is dirty and there is graffiti in the front porch. One of the windows is boarded up. This does not present as a welcoming and well-cared for home. The manager has completed an audit of the refurbishment needed and had arranged for this to take place in the near future.

Two children moved on successfully after the last inspection. Both made exceptionally good progress at the home and were well-prepared to embrace more independent living. Three children have been admitted since February 2014. All are beginning to make good progress and are responding well to the nurture and boundaries provided. Initial behaviour management strategies were not fully effective and some children continued to display high levels of aggressive behaviour. This resulted in significant damage to the fabric and furnishings of the home. The staff team has reflected on its practice and new strategies, including more positive behaviour management measures are proving successful in reducing children's anxieties and aggression. As a result, the number of restraints is steadily diminishing and the level of damage to the home environment is reducing. Children are more settled and relaxed. They benefit from engagement with therapies in accordance with their placement plans.

A key strength of the home is the competence of the established and experienced staff team. Care staff have a good rapport with children and help them to develop emotional resilience, self-esteem and social skills. They are good role models with whom children are beginning to forge strong and trusting relationships. A young person preparing to leave the home shortly said that they have been very happy at the home and the best thing about it is the staff. All children said they are well looked after.

Initial delays in finding suitable education placements resulted in some children having no education for several weeks following their admission to the home. Although staff report that they provided supportive educational activities during this time, there is little evidence of this and no examples of work undertaken are held. The home was not able to provide evidence of being pro-active in working with schools and placing authorities to secure education placements as quickly as possible. However, children are now attending suitable, full-time education placements and with support from staff, have settled in well.

The home safeguards children well. Staffing levels have been increased to ensure the home provides safe care for all children and that an increased need for supervision by some children does not prevent other children from enjoying positive time and outings with staff. Care staff are alert to the potential for bullying and intervene swiftly to protect children from the possibility of harm. They reduce the likelihood of bullying by providing clear guidance, boundaries and advice to children. No children have been missing from care.

There have been several serious incidents of attempted self-harm, assaults on staff

and damage to property. The number, frequency and duration of these incidents is reducing over time. They are well-recorded and notified to the relevant authorities, including placing authorities and HMCI. Staff use restraint appropriately to prevent significant harm to children and others. Not all complaints by third parties are appropriately logged. This was identified by the independent visitor to the home and the manager demonstrated he is taking action to ensure all staff know and follow the complaints procedures.

The new manager has identified that gaps in the handover of information between shifts had reduced the effectiveness of communication between staff and threatened consistency of care. This has been addressed and the level of communication has recently improved. This better promotes consistent care of children.

The Statement of Purpose has been recently reviewed and updated to reflect the current service offered by the home. The children's guide is in the process of being updated to provide a more child-friendly, age appropriate document that suits the needs of the children currently living at the home. This is a work in progress. Placement plans have been updated and are written in a way that is helpful to children when they access their files. This was in response to a recommendation from the last inspection. However, there is little evidence of children being involved in drawing up these plans. Records do not always demonstrate the good work that staff do with children. There is evidence of the manager taking action to improve the home's records.

The new manager has drawn up a development plan based on the weaknesses noted and has begun to implement improvements to the consistency of care, record-keeping and behaviour management strategies. The use of reflective practice and improved levels of consultation with children is quickly resulting in improved quality of care and outcomes for children. This shows the home has capacity to improve.

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
05/02/2014	Full	outstanding
31/07/2013	Interim	good progress
05/03/2013	Full	good
25/07/2012	Interim	not judged

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 the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated (NMS 10.3)
- ensure the home maintains the quality and adequacy of records. In particular, ensure records demonstrate consultation with children and reflect individual work done with children, such as educational support of children not in school. (NMS 22.1)

What inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspections we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

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.