

SC449245

Registered provider: Key's Child Care Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is managed by a private provider and offers care for up to three children.

At the time of the inspection, one child was living at the home. Three children had recently moved on from the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in December 2024.

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 September 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 19 March 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/03/2025	Full	Outstanding
04/03/2024	Full	Outstanding
21/02/2023	Full	Good
17/11/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

During the inspection, the inspector observed the child and engaged with them to learn about their lived experiences in the home.

Children's experiences in the home have been inconsistent. While some children have made progress, others have not achieved the outcomes expected. Although some staff demonstrate warmth, commitment and effective advocacy for children, this is not consistent across the team. Variability in the quality of care and support has affected the progress and day-to-day experiences of some children.

Children's bedrooms are personalised to reflect their individual personalities. Staff are thoughtful in adapting the environment to meet children's specific needs and to help them feel safe and secure. For example, rugs were removed from one child's room, as they caused distress and reminded her of previous experiences. The home is clean, warm and welcoming, and children benefit from a nurturing atmosphere. However, the presence of multiple locked doors detracts from the homely feel and can make the environment feel institutional. The manager is aware and is addressing it.

The home helps children who have had lots of moves in the past to feel settled and safe. Children are now living here for longer than they have in their previous homes, which gives them more stability and a better chance to build positive relationships. However, managers and staff are not consistently delivering therapeutic care. While one child receives regular input through art therapy, previous children's placements were not sustained due to staff struggling to meet the children's needs. When children move into or leave the home, staff plan this carefully so it feels calm and well managed. Staff give children lots of emotional and practical support, even after they have moved on to help them feel safe and cared for.

Staff are proactive in supporting children's education, particularly those who have been out of school. For example, one child sat GCSEs, while another learned functional skills and budgeting. These achievements demonstrate the potential positive impact of staff's support when it is well targeted and sustained.

Staff support family time effectively, and positive interactions between staff and children are evident. Children are offered opportunities to participate in activities they may not have previously experienced, which helps build confidence and promotes enjoyment. One child went on a trip to London, and another regularly engages in fun and stimulating activities, such as soft play, football and swimming. These opportunities contribute positively to children's emotional well-being.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Children are not consistently helped to understand the impact of incidents or supported in repairing relationships with staff or each other. Restorative practice is not embedded in the home's culture, and missed opportunities to rebuild trust have contributed to the deterioration of some relationships. Although safeguarding procedures are followed when allegations are made, children are not always kept informed of outcomes. The emotional impact of such events is not routinely addressed. As a result, children are left without closure or reassurance, which undermines their sense of safety and belonging.

Leaders have acted promptly to strengthen practice following concerns about the use of restraint. On one occasion, poor practice resulted in a child sustaining injuries. Since then, leaders have reviewed incidents, improved oversight and introduced targeted training to ensure staff are better equipped to manage challenging situations safely. These changes are still being embedded and have not yet resulted in consistent practice.

A serious incident involving unsafe behaviours and delayed staff interventions highlighted weaknesses in staff confidence and decision-making. Leaders recognised an over-reliance on reactive measures, including police involvement and environmental restrictions, such as locking the kitchen. In response, targeted staff upskilling has begun, but the impact is not yet fully embedded.

Direct work with children is inconsistent and does not always support children in making sense of their experiences. While some sessions demonstrate meaningful reflection and progress, others lack follow-up and clear purpose. This variability limits children's opportunities to develop insight into their behaviours and understand the impact of their actions.

At the time of the inspection, one child's key documentation was not in place. This was addressed promptly, but the delay may have affected early care planning. Behaviour support plans and risk assessments are now in place and key work is being completed. However, the child's voice is not consistently reflected in these documents.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The registered manager demonstrates reflective practice and a commitment to developing the staff team. However, these improvements have not yet led to consistently safe or effective care. Leadership oversight has been insufficient, particularly when supporting children who previously lived in the home, where staff struggled to meet their needs and safeguarding responses lacked robustness. The therapeutic model is not yet embedded, and staff's confidence in applying it remains variable. This has resulted in inconsistent care delivery and limited the staff's ability to meet children's social and emotional needs effectively.

The responsible individual is aware of the home's challenges and is actively helping the registered manager to implement necessary changes. Key areas for development have been identified, including emotional intelligence, trauma-informed practice, and consistency in recording and safeguarding. Leaders have taken steps to stabilise the home, including pausing admissions to rebuild staff confidence and prioritise safe care. This reflects a responsive and child-focused approach.

Senior management audits have highlighted the need for greater staff accountability and more proactive safeguarding practice. Although leaders have responded appropriately, staff do not consistently apply boundaries and make safe decisions. Improvements are underway, but they are not yet embedded or having a sustained positive impact on the quality of care.

Training has improved staff knowledge in key areas; however, the application of learning remains inconsistent. Staff are beginning to build positive relationships with the child currently living at the home and report increased confidence in supporting the needs of younger children. Despite this progress, practice across the team remains variable, and the therapeutic model is not yet embedded.

Staffing arrangements have improved in some areas, with staff reporting increased support through supervision sessions and training. However, challenges remain. High turnover of staff and continued reliance on agency staff unfamiliar with the children have affected continuity of care. Staff have raised concerns with leaders about staffing arrangements and although leaders have offered reassurance and support, these concerns have not been fully addressed, and current arrangements do not yet consistently promote safe and effective care.

Professionals report strong and responsive communication from the members of the leadership team and view them as protective, proactive and child focused.

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, The 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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm; that the effectiveness of the home's child protection policies is monitored regularly. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(v)(b)(e)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that children are protected from harm and that staff consistently implement safe and effective behaviour management strategies. Leaders must ensure that improvements in training and oversight of restraint practice are fully embedded and result in consistently safe practice that protects children from avoidable harm.	30 October 2025
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff—	30 October 2025

meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans;

help each child to develop socially aware behaviour;

encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding;

help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone;

communicate to each child expectations about the child's behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding;

help each child to understand, in a way that is appropriate according to the child's age and understanding, personal, sexual and social relationships, and how those relationships can be supportive or harmful;

help each child to develop the understanding and skills to recognise or withdraw from a damaging, exploitative or harmful relationship;

strive to gain each child's respect and trust;

understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children;

are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same;

de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children;

understand and communicate to children that bullying is unacceptable; and

have the skills to recognise incidents or indications of bullying and how to deal with them. (Regulation 11(1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(ix)(x)(xi)(xii)(xiii)) In particular, the registered manager must ensure that restorative work is consistently carried out following incidents between children and adults, as well as between children themselves. In addition, restorative approaches should be embedded in daily practice and used as a tool to help children understand the impact of their behaviour, rebuild trust, and maintain positive connections at the home.	
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)) In particular, the registered manager must ensure consistent leadership oversight to deliver safe and effective care. Managers must ensure that children receive consistent care from a skilled and stable staff team and that the therapeutic model is embedded. In addition, manager must take action to address staff concerns about staffing levels, shift cover, and unfamiliar staff need to be addressed.	30 October 2025

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that they strengthen the consistency and quality of direct work with children. In addition, that all sessions have a clear purpose, are followed up appropriately, and support children to reflect meaningfully on their experiences. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.14)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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: SC449245

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Keys Child Care Ltd

Registered provider address: Keys Group, Maybrook House, Third Floor, Queensway, Halesowen B63 4AH

Responsible individual: Eleanor Brammer

Registered manager: Cody Bagley

Inspector

Karen Hallam, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

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