

2548418

# Assurance visit

## Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home was registered in October 2019. It is part of a cross-regional project which has been set up between The Keys Group Ltd and four local authorities (Oxfordshire, Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes). According to its statement of purpose, the aim is to provide an established and respected good-quality service of care, education and therapeutic input and support for four children with emotional and behavioural difficulties to live close to their local area.

**Visit dates:** 7 to 8 September 2020

**Previous inspection date:** 2 July 2020

**Previous inspection judgement:** No judgment given

## 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 identified no serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

### **The care of children**

The children said that they are happy and well cared for by the staff. This is achieved by consistent staff practice, which provides the children with clear boundaries that make them feel protected and nurtured. The staff encourage the children to look after their home and set chores aligned with individual targets. For example, one child is responsible for watering all the house plants. The child told the inspector, 'I like this responsibility as I am helping something to grow.' This sets an excellent example of how the child is learning to care for something that requires their love and attention to grow and flourish.

The children have a voice in their home and have enjoyed a wide range of activities supported by the staff since COVID-19 restrictions were lifted. This has included trips to theme parks, quad biking and tree-top rope courses. This has benefited the children greatly and has continued to build and promote trusting and secure relationships with the staff.

During COVID-19 restrictions, the children showed empathy towards an elderly neighbour by expressing their concern for them. The staff then supported the children to buy a plant and hamper and deliver it safely next door. This modelling of behaviour strengthens community inclusion and promotes the helping of others in a time of need.

The home is clean and welcoming with appropriate hygiene facilities in place for the washing and sanitising of hands. The interim manager is aware that some of the internal walls towards the back of the home need repainting, and two rooms require attention to create a homelier environment. The children have discussed their ideas for these rooms, and the interim manager is now at the planning stage with the support from the staff team.

### **The safety of children**

The staff are risk aware but not risk adverse. Comprehensive risk assessments identify individual risks, and these are reviewed regularly. Risk assessments provide an appropriate balance between safety strategies and allowing the children to maximise their life experiences by taking acceptable risks. This increases opportunities for the children to enjoy new experiences and to develop resilience, while ensuring that they are kept safe from harm. An example of this is the staff supporting one child to explore the possibility of Go Karting for the first time.

The interim manager responds well to allegations made against the staff. The staff are familiar with the clear processes and procedures that are in place for them to follow in the event of an allegation made by children. The staff are well informed

and competent in the reporting and recording of children's disclosures; however, there was a lack of detail identified in one child's lone working risk assessment. The interim manager plans to address this shortfall immediately after the inspection.

All the staff have received safeguarding training, and refresher learning is planned for the end of this month. The interim manager is acutely aware of the potential gaps created by online learning and has started to book face-to-face training as soon as this has become available.

## **Leaders and managers**

Leadership succession planning is well under way. Senior leaders have recently employed a new manager to join the home at the end of September 2020. The interim manager plans to return as the home's responsible individual and understands the legal responsibility to register the new manager with Ofsted.

The interim manager and the staff have a shared vision for the service. They are focused on providing a secure and stable base for the children to enable them to progress and achieve. Because of this, the children are making progress at an appropriate pace, taking into account their individual needs. This is primarily due to the interim manager's understanding of the children's differing needs, the creation of realistic care plans and the setting of achievable goals and targets.

Staff have high aspirations for the children and manage their complex emotional and behavioural needs well. The staff demonstrate a commitment to overcoming difficult and challenging self-harming behaviours. The interim manager and senior staff work in close partnership with a range of professionals and specialist services to safeguard the children and to meet their holistic needs, at a time that is suitable for the child. This approach demonstrates their dedication to wanting the best care and outcomes for the children.

The interim manager has not sent to Ofsted the most recent quality of care review. However, this report was subsequently sent to the inspector following the inspection.

## **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, 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
<p>The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children (“a quality of care review”) at least once every 6 months.</p> <p>In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating—</p> <p>the quality of care provided for children;</p> <p>the feedback and opinions of children about the children’s home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and</p> <p>any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children.</p> <p>After completing a quality of care review, the registered person must produce a written report about the quality of care review and the actions which the registered person intends to take as a result of the quality of care review (“the quality of care review report”).</p> <p>The registered person must—</p> <p>supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed; and</p> <p>make a copy of the quality of care review report available on request to a placing authority, if the placing authority is not the parent of a child accommodated in the home.</p> <p>The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (1)(2)(a)(b)(c)(3)(4)(a)(b)(5))</p>	<p>09/10/2020</p>

## Recommendations

Staff should provide a nurturing environment that is welcoming, supportive, and which provides appropriate boundaries in relation to their behaviour. Homes must also meet children s basic day to day needs and physical necessities. Staff should seek to meet the child s basic needs in the way that a good parent would,

recognising that many children in residential care have experienced environments where these needs have not been consistently met doing so is an important aspect of demonstrating that the staff care for the child and value them as an individual. ('Guide to the children's home regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.7)

In particular, ensure that walls in need of redecoration are painted and rooms appropriately furnished.

## **Children's home details**

**Unique reference number:** 2548418

**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:** Emma Beech

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

## **Inspector**

Kelly Monniot, 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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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