

1267650

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a private organisation and is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three children or young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since 2018.

Visit dates: 22 to 23 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 7 January 2020

Previous inspection judgement: Sustained effectiveness

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 did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Children say that they can talk to staff and that they can rely on them, which shows that they have positive relationships. Staff ensure that children have daily routines in place, which helps children to feel secure.

During the lockdown period, children enjoyed activities such as a summer ball with staff playing the part of security. Significant dates were celebrated, such as Victory in Europe Day, to teach children about historical events. Children have also been involved in an upcycling project to raise money for charity, which helped them to contribute positively to their local community. Staff bring variety and enjoyment to children's lives, which helps them to create positive memories.

Staff supported children to complete learning which was set by their school during lockdown. When children face issues with home learning, staff share this appropriately with educational professionals. As a result, arrangements for children's learning are adapted to suit individual learning styles so that children continue to make progress.

Children have helped staff to redecorate the communal living areas to refresh the presentation of the home. This involvement provides children with an opportunity to feel invested in their home. Staff praise and reward the efforts of children, which helps to raise children's self-esteem.

Staff support children to safely use technology to remain in contact with their families when the restrictions of COVID-19 limit social gatherings.

Staff take a child-friendly approach when explaining the COVID-19 pandemic to children, so that they understand what they need to do to promote their own good health.

Children's views and wishes are invited and encouraged by staff. Children demonstrate that they feel confident to share their views, such as a preference regarding the format of house meetings. Staff act promptly in response to children's suggestions, which shows children that their voice is heard and their input is important.

The safety of children

Children trust staff and seek reassurance from them when they need this to help them to feel safe and secure. Staff respond swiftly to children's needs, which helps children to feel protected and safe.

Staff support children by providing them with consistent boundaries. Children are helped to understand the expectations of their behaviour and to take responsibility

for their actions. The support that children receive helps them to develop positive behaviour.

Key-work sessions are used to reinforce to children what it means to be safe and how to keep themselves safe. Staff understand the risks that children are exposed to and deliver sessions to help children understand risk and develop skills to become safer.

Staff share information with children about additional services that are available to them, including independent services such as advocacy. Children can access these with or without staff assistance, as they choose. This offers children an alternative outlet should they need it, to share any concerns that may arise.

Children are held by appropriately trained staff in response to crisis behaviour. The manager demonstrates effective monitoring of her team to ensure that their practice is safe and that their actions are specifically to protect children.

Leaders and managers

The manager is suitably qualified and experienced for the position held. Her staff team is stable and continues to provide consistency for children.

Children's case records provide staff with clear and concise information to follow to understand children's needs. There is evidence throughout the documents viewed that the manager scrutinises and evaluates the care that children receive.

The manager holds regular team meetings, which she uses as an opportunity to help her team to reflect on practice and to learn how to adapt to the individual needs of children. She monitors and reviews the care children receive and brings this information to the attention of the members of her team, which supports them to learn and develop where shortfalls have been identified.

Supervisions are routinely provided for staff to help them to reflect on their practice. The manager recognises the need to ensure that the mental health of her staff team is considered. She held extra supervisions, specifically to explore the impact that COVID-19 may have on staff.

The manager recognises when the skill set of her staff team could be strengthened and arranges training to develop their practice. The manager has compiled and delivered in-house training sessions for her senior staff, to ensure that there is consistency during times when she is away from the home. This ensures that the standard of care children receive is maintained.

Professionals gave positive feedback about the manager and her team, including their effective multi-agency working and good communication. However, in one case, a professional felt that their input had not been sought. This has not had a

negative effect on children, but a recommendation is made to ensure that there is consistency to involve other agencies.

The previously issued requirements have been met.

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

Recommendations

- Beyond local authorities, there are other people, bodies and organisations that have responsibilities towards children in children's homes. Many of these are referenced specifically in the Regulations and Guide. They might include health and education services, local safeguarding partners, leaving care services, IROs, voluntary agencies, the police and youth offending teams. This list is not exhaustive. The important thing is that homes take the initiative in identifying others who must play a part for their children and engage with those relevant people proactively, advocating for the children in their care.
(‘Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards,’ page 12, paragraph 2.7)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1267650

Registered provider: Keys NHCC Limited

Registered provider address: Maybrook House, 2nd Floor, Queensway, Halesowen, Worcestershire B63 4AH

Responsible individual: Janet Porter

Registered manager: Nicola Dick

Inspector

Paula Kelly, Social Care Inspector

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