

1244493

Registered provider: Stepping Stones Children's Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is operated by a private organisation and is registered to provide care for up to four children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

At the time of the inspection, three children were living at the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in November 2022.

The inspection was brought forward to address specific allegations received by Ofsted. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate allegations of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the allegations were considered (where appropriate) alongside other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 July 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 7 February 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/02/2024	Full	Good
02/11/2022	Full	Good
10/03/2022	Full	Outstanding
27/11/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are making good progress from their starting points. They are cared for by a committed and nurturing staff team and they have a good understanding of children's needs. Children form trusting relationships with staff and say that they are happy at the home.

When children move into the home, it is well planned. This includes staff visiting children before moving in and explaining to them what life at the home would be like. This helps to reduce children's anxieties and they settle in quickly as they are clear of the expectations.

Children's health needs are being met. Staff support children to attend routine health appointments and educate them on the importance of a healthy lifestyle and living an active life. Staff are supported by the company therapist, who offers advice and support on how to help children with their emotional health needs.

The manager has high expectations that children attend school or college. Children have gaps in their education before moving into the home and found attending school difficult. The manager is working with other professionals to ensure that children are supported in re-engaging in their education. Children are encouraged to attend through incentives and looking at alternative provisions that will engage them and meet their individual needs.

Staff support children to stay connected with their families and other people important to them, including when family live a long distance from the home. Children are also encouraged to have regular phone calls with their families.

Staff celebrate children's achievements. There are weekly incentives and goals set for the children. Staff also reward them when they achieve small steps in making positive choices, which helps them to develop their self-esteem and confidence.

Children are encouraged to take part in several activities in the local community. They go to the local gym, for walks in the park, and to theme parks and go-karting. This helps children to develop their interests and supports their emotional well-being.

Staff support children to be involved in their day-to-day care. They are consulted on their activities and menu choices. Children spend time with staff discussing issues identified in their care plans. However, the input children have in these discussions is not consistently clear, nor whether they understand what is expected of them.

Staff are proactive in supporting children to develop age-appropriate independence skills. Children are supported each week in planning and budgeting for their own meals. This is giving them confidence to be prepared for adult life.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Children feel safe in the home and understand the complaints procedure. They could identify a trusted adult they would go to if they had any worries or concerns. There have been two complaints since the last inspection and the manager has ensured that these have been addressed appropriately.

Staff have a good understanding of the children's risks and vulnerabilities and take appropriate action to address these. There are in-depth risk assessments in place. However, one child's assessments have not been kept up to date and do not include clear guidelines for staff on how to manage the risks.

When children go missing from home, staff follow clear missing-from-home procedures, which includes looking for the child to locate them. Staff work in partnership with other safeguarding agencies to promote children's safety. Children speak to an independent person on their return, so they have an opportunity to express their views.

Staff encourage positive behaviour. Staff use proactive techniques to help children to manage their frustrations and anxieties. Children respond well to this approach. Physical intervention has been used on one occasion and was necessary to keep children safe.

The manager reports any safeguarding concerns to the relevant professionals and completes any investigations required. Staff have a good understanding of the whistle-blowing policies. However, the manager did not ensure that the local authority was kept informed of the outcome of an investigation in a timely manner. This does not ensure that there continues to be positive partnership working and clear oversight.

Children enjoy a comfortable, clean, tidy and safe living environment. The manager ensures that all health and safety checks are completed, and shortfalls have been addressed from the previous inspection. The manager has a clear plan in place to redecorate the home and this work is currently being done.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is child-centred and committed to continually improve the quality of care provided. He has a good understanding of children's needs. The manager is being supported in his role by an experienced responsible individual and team leaders. This ensures that there is clear management oversight of the day-to-day running of the home.

There is now a stable staff team in place who share the same aspiration for children as the manager. This provides consistency and stability. As part of their individual development, staff are taking on extra responsibilities and this is giving them a feeling of shared ownership. However, the rota is not kept up to date to show an accurate record of staff's working hours.

Staff have access to a comprehensive training programme which includes a clear induction. Through this training, staff have the knowledge and skills to meet children's needs. Staff said that they value the training as it helps them develop their skills and gives them confidence in their role.

The manager ensures that supervision sessions are regular and supportive for staff. There is an opportunity for staff to reflect on their practice and identify any additional training needs. Staff said that they feel supported by the manager.

Staff have regular team meetings. This gives the team an opportunity to come together, reflect and share information effectively. This ensures that there is consistency in meeting children's needs.

The manager works proactively with other professionals, building positive working relationships. Professionals said that communication is good, and they are kept up to date on the progress that children are making. The manager escalates concerns if responses from others are not satisfactory. This helps to ensure that children receive the right support to meet their needs.

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
Schedule 4 sets out the other information that the registered person must keep in relation to a children's home. The registered person must— maintain in the home the records in Schedule 4; ensure that the records are kept up to date; and retain the records for at least 15 years from the date of the last entry. (Regulation 37 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c)) In particular, the registered provider must ensure that the staff rota contains a factual record of actual hours worked and by which staff member.	2 September 2024
The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who— develop positive relationships with them; engage with them; and take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child's	2 September 2024

best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare;

help each child to express views, wishes and feelings.

help each child to understand how the child's views, wishes and feelings have been taken into account and give the child reasons for decisions in relation to the child.

(Regulation 7 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii))

In particular, the registered person must ensure that discussions recorded clearly identify the child's input and their understanding of what is expected of them to meet their care plans.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the relevant officer in the local authority is promptly informed of any outcome of an investigation into an allegation against a staff member working at the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 44, paragraph 9.18)
- The registered person should ensure that they continually and actively assess the risk to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. Risk assessments should be kept up to date and include details of the steps staff will take to manage any assessed risks. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)

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: 1244493

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Stepping Stones Children's Homes Limited

Responsible individual: Douglas Loney

Registered manager: Dil Khan

Inspectors

Simon Jones, Social Care Inspector
Eve Ostridge, 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
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