

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. The provider states in its statement of purpose that it provides care for children who may have social and emotional difficulties.

The registered manager post has been vacant since May 2022. A new manager has been appointed and has applied for registration with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 November 2022

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: 10 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/03/2022	Full	Outstanding
27/11/2019	Full	Good
31/07/2018	Full	Good
20/02/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children benefit from well-planned care that promotes their needs effectively and contributes to change and improvement in their lives. Children make good progress in relation to their starting points across aspects of their welfare, physical, social, emotional and behavioural development. Children enjoy good relationships with staff and sustain their positive attachments. They benefit from consistency and stability in their lives.

Children are engaged in education and staff support children to attend school regularly. However, one child is on a reduced education timetable, which means that their attendance is less than 25 hours a week. Consequently, the quality of their learning is affected.

Children are registered with the health services they need to be healthy. They attend their routine health appointments with support and encouragement from staff. Staff are familiar with the types of health decisions and responsibilities that are delegated to them, and medical consent is obtained appropriately.

A therapy team supports staff to deliver therapeutic parenting. This helps children to develop secure attachments with staff and promotes their sense of security and personal safety. A social worker reported, 'I have been very impressed by the support, interventions and therapeutic model and approach used by staff and managers.'

Children are carefully matched, and the needs of other children are considered prior to children coming to live at the home. However, the assessments completed by the manager do not include consultations with children, social workers or previous carers to evidence how decisions are made in terms of placement suitability. A requirement is made in respect of this issue.

Staff support family time to ensure that children sustain their close relationships with the people who are most important to them.

Children benefit from positive activities, such as trampolining, golf, wall climbing and visiting theme parks. One child said, 'I enjoy going to the gym.'

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

Health and safety matters are addressed effectively. The home provides children with an appropriately secure and physically safe environment. However, the accommodation provided for children is looking tired and worn in places. Redecoration and interior and cosmetic improvements are needed throughout the property. Staff said, 'Overall, the home requires a lot of redecorating.'

Children are kept safe and feel safe living at the home. Children know how to make a complaint. However, no complaints have been made since the last inspection. A child said, 'Staff are really nice and [name of staff member] is the best staff in the house.'

One child raised an issue with the inspector. The child said that they needed privacy when praying, as their bedroom blinds were faulty. Another child had damaged the privacy screening on a bedroom window, which also compromised the child's privacy. Consequently, a recommendation is made to address both issues.

Staff are trained in the use of restraint and de-escalation. They apply their acquired skills, knowledge and training in practice to manage children's behaviours safely and effectively. Since the last inspection, there have been a small number of low-level physical restraints used by staff to protect children from harm.

Children rarely go missing from the home. On the occasions that a child has gone missing, staff have acted quickly and followed the home's procedures to secure the child's safe return.

Significant incidents are reported to the appropriate authorities charged with a duty to protect children. Staff maintain effective partnerships with the police and other safeguarding agencies to promote the safety and well-being of children.

Staff have a good understanding of the specific needs and risks associated with individual children. Robust risk-management plans are used by staff to protect children and keep them safe from harm. A social worker reported, 'I am very happy with this placement and feel staff are meeting his [their child's] complex needs to a good standard.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager post has been vacant since May 2022. A new manager has been recruited and has applied for registration with Ofsted. The manager demonstrates strong and effective leadership over the daily operations of the home. Children benefit from living in a home that is managed efficiently and effectively.

The manager ensures that staff are well led and receive regular practice-related supervision. Staff have a clear sense of purpose and direction. A deputy manager has been recruited recently to strengthen the arrangements for the management and leadership of the home. Staff said, '[Name of manager] has managed coming into a new home with new staff really well. He has made great changes and is a very fair person with the children.'

Staff benefit from good-quality training to enhance their experience, skills and knowledge in caring for children who are vulnerable. Most staff are suitably qualified, and those who are not qualified are enrolled to complete training to enable them to obtain their relevant qualifications. Staff meet the aims and objectives as set out in the home's statement of purpose.

At the time of this inspection, closed-circuit television was being used internally, outside a child's bedroom to monitor the child's movements. This was despite the child being heavily supervised by two staff members, and his bedroom door also being alarmed. This practice compromises children's privacy and is intrusive. However, the provider has since removed all internal cameras in the home, given that there are robust safety measures in place to safeguard children.

An independent professional visits the home regularly to review the standard and quality of children's care. They produce a report for the manager to help them to recognise and understand the strengths and weaknesses of the home. However, visits are always announced and not a mixture of both announced and unannounced visits.

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
The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if— the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children; the child's placing authority consents in writing to the monitoring or surveillance; so far as reasonably practicable in the light of the child's age and understanding, the child is informed in advance of the intention to do the monitoring or surveillance; and the monitoring or surveillance is no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child's need for privacy. This regulation is subject to any monitoring or surveillance requirements imposed by a court. (Regulation 24 (1)(a)(b)(c)(d) (2))	20 December 2022
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child; and	24 February 2023

enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(i)(ii)) This particularly refers to the redecoration and refurbishment of the home.	
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children’s home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home’s statement of purpose. (Regulation 14 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)) This relates specifically to risk impact assessments and the need to include the outcome of consultations held with relevant professionals to inform the home’s decision-making, and what contact was made with the child, social worker and previous carers.	9 January 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the design of the home includes any necessary adaptations to meet the children’s needs. Specifically, ensure that bedroom windows are obscured to protect children’s privacy. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 17, paragraph 3.24)
- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and ensure that wherever possible visits are unannounced. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 55, paragraph 10.25)
- The registered person should ensure that children have access to full-time education while they are of compulsory school age. The home must aim to support full-time attendance at school unless the child’s relevant plan indicates this is not in their best interests. (‘Guide to the Children Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 28, paragraph 5.14)

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: 1244493

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Stepping Stones Children's Homes Limited

Registered provider address: 34 Church Street, Hyde SK14 1JJ

Responsible individual: Nicola Brown

Registered manager: Dil Khan

Inspector

Anthony Kyem, Social Care Inspector

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