

1244493

Registered provider: Stepping Stones Children's Homes Ltd
Interim inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This service is run by a private company. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for four children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection date: 20 February 2018

Judgement at last inspection: good

Date of last inspection: 19 July 2017

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

This inspection

The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection

This home was judged good at the last full inspection. At the interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has sustained effectiveness.

The home has had one inspection since it was registered in February 2017. During the last few months there have been a number of changes to the home's management and staff team. Young people have coped with the changes exceptionally well. This is because the staff have taken time to get to know the young people. They explain to young people how staff will care for them and what staff expect from the young people, including, for example, their attendance in education. Young people are happy in the home. They are polite to visitors and have positive relationships with the staff and each other. A young person said, 'Staff care about us. It's good here.'

One young person has recently been admitted to the home. The manager robustly

evaluates the potential impact that a new admission may have on the other young people who live at the home. This evaluation proved to be effective, and the effects on the existing young people were minimal. The group welcomed the young person into the home, helping him to feel comfortable and gain a sense of belonging in his new environment. This resulted in the young person settling quickly and making positive relationships with staff and the young people who live at the home.

Staff promote young people's contact with families in line with young people's care plans. Staff supervise some young people's contact sessions if this is required. Staff are proactive in communicating with placing social workers when contact is having a negative effect on young people. They ensure that contact is a positive experience for the whole family. This means that young people can maintain relationships with those who are important to them in a safe way.

Young people who live in this home have made good progress in all aspects of their development, such as education attendance. There has also been a significant reduction in criminal behaviour. Many young people came to the home with extremely poor educational attendance, which reduced their long-term prospects. Staff explore the barriers to learning and support young people to overcome these issues. Key staff encourage and help young people to engage in the right level of education provision which is specific to their needs.

Staff support young people to engage in recreational and social activities outside the home, such as boxing, swimming and attending the local gym. This has provided young people with new interests and distractions, and has been pivotal in reducing negative behaviour. Young people develop practical skills, such as cooking and self-care tasks, in preparation for independence. This has resulted in young people taking a pride in their home and themselves, and will assist them in their adult lives.

At the time of the inspection, young people were on half-term holiday. The young people encouraged each other to participate in an exercise session in the living room, cheering each other on. Staff gave young people lots of praise, increasing their confidence to progress with the activity. Young people have recently learned about slavery and enjoyed visiting the slavery museum in Liverpool. They were looking forward to going on a day trip to Blackpool pleasure beach.

Staff value young people and have high aspirations for them. The group is extremely proud of all the young people's achievements and they celebrate these by displaying certificates and awards in the home. Young people like living at their home and have great respect for their manager and staff. This is because staff genuinely care about them, and want them to achieve positive outcomes in all aspects of their lives.

The home takes a collaborative approach to meeting young people's needs. Strong links are maintained with other agencies, including youth offending workers and education professionals. This ensures that young people receive the correct level of care and support to meet their specific needs. A social worker commented, 'Staff provide an excellent level of care to young people. I am given updates about [Name's] progress,

achievements and behaviour.'

Clear, consistent boundaries and positive relationships have been developed, which means that physical intervention has only been necessary on one occasion. This method was used to ensure the safety of the young person. There have been two incidents when young people have gone missing from the home. Staff follow procedures and search for young people. They contact the police and local authority, and attempt to maintain contact with young people and their families. The manager consistently ensures that independent return home interviews are undertaken. This information helps staff to understand and evaluate any issues or concerns that young people may have when they are missing from the home.

Staff support young people to develop skills and strategies to manage their own conflicts. They understand how the young people's experiences and current emotions can be communicated through their behaviour. Staff provide opportunities for young people to talk about what causes anxiety and frustration, and devise strategies for them to manage these in a calmer way. This has resulted in a reduction of incidents, and young people are learning to manage their risk-taking behaviours in a more positive way. For example, they might go for a walk or talk to staff when they feel anxious or upset.

Shortfalls were identified during this inspection in relation to the manager's lack of challenge when placing authorities do not provide placement plans for young people. In addition, the manager did not notify Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of a serious incident when a young person went missing from the home. This delays the opportunity for the inspector to track patterns or trends and does not contribute to the safeguarding of young people.

Since the last inspection there has been one allegation made by a young person against a member of staff. The manager dealt with this swiftly and followed organisational procedures. Staff employed at the home are subject to suitable vetting procedures and individuals do not start working in the home until all appropriate checks are complete.

The manager is fairly new to this home. He was registered in February 2018. He is suitably qualified and highly experienced in leading and managing the staff team. Prior to this position, he was the registered manager of a home within another organisation, which he managed effectively. He is supported by an experienced deputy manager. Managers and staff are child focused and are committed to young people's individual development, safety and care. The manager makes good use of internal and external monitoring systems to monitor young people's progress and the care that staff provide.

The manager has ensured that the requirement from the last inspection has been met. This was in relation to securing a missing staff reference and verifying the document with the author, which has now been completed.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/07/2017	Full	Good

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
If the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5(c)) This is with particular reference to challenging and escalating concerns where current and relevant placement plans for young people are not provided in a timely manner.	26/03/2018
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(e))	26/03/2018

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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 Ltd

Registered provider address: 139-143 Union Street, Oldham OL1 1TE

Responsible individual: Ahtesham-UI Haque

Registered manager: Ali Sajjad

Inspector

Jo Hornby, social care inspector

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