

2588593

Registered provider: Stepping Stones Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is privately owned and provides care for up to 4 children who experience social and emotional difficulties.

At the time of this inspection, 2 children were living at the home. One child moved out of the home in early January 2026.

The manager registered with Ofsted in January 2024.

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 January 2026

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	outstanding
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 9 October 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/10/2024	Full	Good
27/02/2024	Full	Good
06/12/2022	Full	Good
28/06/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The home provides a calm, safe and stable base for children to grow. Children live in a supportive home, where managers and staff ensure that the principles of playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy are part of their everyday lives. Staff know the children well and respond to them in a trauma-informed manner, which provides a stabilising environment. One child described staff as 'really kind' and 'very patient'.

A strength of the home is the staff's knowledge and skills in providing a strong therapeutic approach to their work with children. As a result, children are living in a home where they feel accepted and safe. A staff member commented that staff work from a place of seeking to understand children, and this culture of curiosity and acceptance ensures that children feel they can be themselves in the home.

Staff create opportunities for children to learn responsibility and build empathy. Staff support children in owning pets if they wish. A pet rabbit has become an integral part of the home. The children learn from caring for animals that they have the capacity and ability to be caring and responsible.

Staff prioritise children's relationships with their families. Children have meaningful and improving connections with family members, which include overnight visits. Staff and family members maintain effective communication, ensuring a consistent level of care and support for each child. A parent spoken to commented positively about the good communication with staff.

Staff help children who are preparing for independence by teaching practical life skills in planned support sessions and through ongoing discussions. Children can see their progress towards their goals and know the areas where they still need to develop. The support from staff helps children grow in confidence as they acquire the necessary skills for independent living. Due to the manager's ingenuity, young people who leave continue to receive support from staff after they have transitioned to independence.

Staff advocate for children in all areas, including in education. However, children in the home are not participating in any education or formal learning, hindering their confidence in returning to structured education.

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

Children are safe in the home. There is a culture of long-term stability both in the length of children's placements and with the staff who care for them. As a result, children benefit greatly from being cared for by a consistent team of staff who know them well. A child's social worker reported that the child says they feel safe in the home and receives good support staff.

Leaders and managers ensure that staff receive relevant training in trauma-informed practice and safeguarding concerns. A clinical lead holds monthly reflective practice supervision with all staff to discuss children's risks and progress. Children participate in therapeutic sessions with an in-house counsellor. Children's physical and emotional health is prioritised, and their safeguarding is paramount.

Managers and staff have a thorough understanding of the known and potential risks to children. Risk assessments, which are updated regularly, are clear and detailed. Frequent key-work sessions are an effective way of speaking with children about their risks. When a new risk is identified for an individual child, staff receive relevant training to help them identify solutions to best support that child.

Serious incidents involving children are rare. When they occur, staff follow appropriate safeguarding steps and work closely with other professionals to keep children safe. Leaders and managers ensure that there is an effective system for the vigorous review and oversight of incidents. The managers ensure that learning takes place to help reduce the likelihood of future incidents. One social worker said that staff deal with incidents 'without judgement or prejudice, from a holistic standpoint'.

Leaders and managers implement efficient safer recruitment practices when employing staff. New staff members receive a comprehensive induction. This means that all staff receive consistency in their training and learning about the therapeutic ethos of the home. The ongoing training staff receive on safeguarding topics and trauma-informed practice results in them supporting children in an effective and compassionate way.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is an experienced leader who is ambitious for the home, staff and every child. One member of staff commented on how the registered manager has 'curated a therapeutic environment where children can be themselves'. The registered manager ensures that the principles of playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy are embedded fully in practice. As a result, every child feels at home, and staff are well supported.

Staff receive regular reflective supervision that considers their wellbeing and prioritises children's needs. Supervision is also an effective space to support and challenge staff to ensure their own professional development. Staff's annual appraisals are strengthened by including the views of colleagues and children. This demonstrates how well the children's voices are heard in the home.

The registered manager has shared her previous knowledge and experience to create bespoke training for staff on attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. This training has been rolled out to staff in other homes in the provider's network. The registered manager is a perceptive and intuitive leader who is committed to using their experience and skills to lead a dedicated team of staff who are also passionate about their work with children.

The registered manager's creativity and passion for supporting young people after they have transitioned to independent living mean that they have an opportunity to continue receiving support after they move out at age 18. The registered manager conceived an idea for the 'Continued Care Plan'. The approach enables staff to provide additional support to young people after they move out, reflecting the support a parent might provide. One staff member said that this support programme is one of the best things the company has ever done.

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

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that leaders and managers work closely with the placing authority to ensure that the child is supported and enabled to resume full-time education as soon as possible. In the interim, managers should ensure that staff support the child in sustaining and regaining their confidence in education and participating in suitable structured activities. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.15)

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: 2588593

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Stepping Stones Care Limited

Registered provider address: Camomile House, 6 Embassy Drive, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 1TP

Responsible individual: Lucy Mitchell

Registered manager: Catherine Neal

Inspector

Julie Cresswell, Social Care Inspector

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