

2588593

Registered provider: Stepping Stones Care Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The children's home provides care and accommodation for up to four children between the ages of 11 and 17 years old with social and emotional difficulties.

The children's home was registered in May 2020. This is the home's first inspection.

The manager was registered in February 2021.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 24 February 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 28 to 29 June 2021

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: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff warmly welcome children into a comfortable home. The family atmosphere in the home is enhanced by children and staff engaging in everyday conversations and discussions such as, 'How was school?' or 'What's for tea?' A member of staff explained this informal and relaxed approach as, 'We see ourselves as one family.'

Children develop trusting relationships with the staff, and they settle quickly in the home. Children are regularly consulted, and the registered manager considers and acts on children's requests. Children say that they feel trusted. Children thrive from their positive experiences and make good progress in all aspects of their lives.

Staff successfully encourage children to broaden their experiences. They enrich their experiences with a wide range of tailored activities in the community. Staff actively support children's individual hobbies, such as buying particular equipment or club memberships. Children have actively participated in the home's in-house talent show. This was a great success.

Children learn age-appropriate independence skills and are given personalised incentives, such as to tidy their bedroom or return home on time, to enhance their age-appropriate responsibilities.

Staff are resourceful in overcoming any barriers to children's education. Staff successfully challenge and advocate for children, to ensure access to formal education alongside wider, work-experience learning opportunities. All the children living in the home engage in their education and work towards their chosen qualifications.

The home's premises are well maintained and comfortable. Children's bedrooms are personalised to their taste. The building is safe and secure. However, during the inspection, the inspector found that the stair bannister was sticky to the touch. It was thought that sanitiser may have caused the paint to deteriorate. Although this particular item did not present a health hazard to the children, it detracts from the overall feel of the home.

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

Leaders and managers embrace appropriate forms of technology to help protect and promote children's welfare. When children are out in the community or missing from care, children and staff can quickly message each other to confirm their location and their safety. Children's internet access is suitably filtered and monitored. These software solutions help protect children from harm.

Children contribute to all aspects of their care and understand their care plans. They are supported by staff and advocates to attend their review meetings. Where

children prefer, they choose to contribute to their review meetings via a safe and secure interactive computer software application.

Staff arrange focused key-work sessions regularly with the children. Examples include regular support and encouragement, to help build children's confidence, develop social skills and improve bedtime routines. This contributes to children's needs being met well.

The staff team are dynamic, using periods of lockdown to help children with additional learning. Children access online skills training. Learning opportunities in sensitive subjects, such as 'how to manage court appearances' and 'why carers worry when you go missing', add to children's knowledge and understanding.

Children's risk assessments are detailed and kept up to date. Risks to children, such as being missing from care and child sexual exploitation, are reduced. Children say that they feel safe.

Staff rarely use physical restraint to manage complex behaviour. If restraint is used, the action is necessary to prevent harm or injury to children or others. However, one physical intervention record viewed at the inspection does not meet regulatory recording requirements.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Professionals praise the 'unquestionable dedication' of the leaders, managers and the staff team. They describe the staff as being caring, insightful, supportive, helpful and exceptional. The registered manager is similarly praised as being hardworking, driven and dedicated.

Staff benefit from fortnightly team meeting that include team building exercises and employee of the month awards. Staff share professional advice and updates. This helps staff to provide consistent care in response to the children's changing needs.

All staff hold or are working towards a relevant residential children's home qualification. Staff training has continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as a result of the pandemic, some key face-to-face training has not been undertaken. The registered manager is aware of this shortfall and is actively sourcing training to meet the needs of the staff team.

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the home's strengths and areas for development. The service development plan sets out details and actions to further raise standards and practice at the home. The requirements set at the previous monitoring visit have been met. However, the quality of care review does not include the feedback and opinions from professionals and others. This is a missed opportunity to further develop the service.

Leaders and managers ensure that care planning processes are effective. They make child-centred decisions when exploring possible new placements. However, the child

matching document does not include sufficient detail to clearly set out placement decision making.

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 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. The conditions are – that the care is delivered by a person who – has the experience, knowledge and skills to deliver that care. (Regulation (6) (1)(a)(b) (3)(c)(i))	31 October 2021
The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the name of the child; details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used;	31 October 2021

the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure; within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so (“the authorised person”)— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c))	
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children (“a quality of care review”) at least once every 6 months. In order to complete a quality of care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children’s home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. After completing a quality of care review, the registered person must produce a written report about the quality of care review and the actions which the registered person intends to take as a result of the quality of care review (“the quality of care review report”). The registered person must—	31 October 2021

supply to HMCI a copy of the quality of care review report within 28 days of the date on which the quality of care review is completed; and

make a copy of the quality of care review report available on request to a placing authority, if the placing authority is not the parent of a child accommodated in the home.

The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff.

(Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c) (3) (4)(a)(b) (5))

Recommendations

- The registered person should strive to make the children's home a nurturing and supportive environment that is homely. In particular, they should ensure that the sticky surface on the staircase bannister is removed. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should fully consider the impact that any new placement will have on the existing group of children. In particular, the registered person should further develop the home's impact risk assessment records. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)

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 Ltd

Registered provider address: Office 10, Apex House, Calthorpe Road,
Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 1TR

Responsible individual: Paul Carr

Registered manager: Alison Macaulay

Inspector

Victoria Jones, Social Care Inspector

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