

2629230

Registered provider: Stepping Stones Care (Midlands) Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A private company owns this home. It provides care for up to two children aged between eight and 18 years with social and emotional needs.

A registered manager is in post. She is taking a planned absence from work. An interim manager has been appointed, but they have yet to make an application to Ofsted to be registered.

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 April 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	inadequate
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	inadequate
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
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Date of last inspection: 26 May 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/05/2022	Full	Good
11/01/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

At the time of the inspection, two children lived at the home. The judgement in relation to the experience of children has been affected by the failure of managers and staff to respond appropriately to a serious safeguarding incident.

Outside of this concern, children have made some good progress and enjoy some positive experiences.

Since the last inspection, a child has been supported by staff to move on positively to a foster home. The children that have moved in to the home have developed warm relationships with staff. One child spoke of being happy in the home and said that they would tell a child moving in to the home that it is good living there.

Staff understand the importance of education. Children have good attendance at school or have improved their attendance since moving in to the home. Staff understand the challenges that some children face at school, and advocate on their behalf to ensure that they are supported to manage their behaviour there.

Children enjoy participating in varied activities, such as attending youth clubs, playing board games, arts and crafts, playing football, and supporting their favourite team, through good times and bad. Memory books capture activities that children have enjoyed while living in the home and special occasions, such as Christmas, birthdays and the anniversary of them moving in to the home.

The importance of family time is recognised. Staff support children to keep in touch with people who are important to them, in line with their care plans.

Children are up to date with immunisations and are supported to attend routine health appointments. They are also helped by staff to make healthy choices about diet and exercise.

The home is warm and comfortable, and paintwork was being refreshed during this inspection. There is a spacious enclosed garden with opportunities for outdoor play with a basketball ring and punchbag. Children's bedrooms are a reasonable size and reflect their personal taste and interests. The new manager has identified some additional touches that will improve the décor in the bedrooms.

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

Staff and the registered manager did not follow the home's policy in relation to a serious allegation made by a child. Senior managers were not aware of the allegation, and safeguarding processes had not been followed. Consequently, no assessment had been made in relation to the potential risk to children living in the

home, nor were steps taken to safeguard children. Managers acknowledged this. Steps were taken during the inspection to refer the matter to the local authority designated officer and the child's social worker so that appropriate action to investigate the allegation could commence.

When the child raised the serious safeguarding concern they were not listened to by staff. This failure means that staff are not creating an environment where children can raise issues confident in the knowledge that they will be taken seriously.

Children rarely go missing from home. However, staff are aware of the steps to take if children leave the home without permission.

Staff understand the risks that children may face online, but balance this with the need to educate them to use the internet safely. Appropriate measures are in place to monitor children's safety online, alongside discussion and education on how to keep themselves safe. Sensors on children's bedroom doors are in use in line with individual risk assessments on their use.

Safer recruitment practice is in place, reducing the risk of unsuitable people being employed in the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The registered manager is on long-term leave that has been planned. Another manager was identified to take over and was introduced to the children. However, after a period of a few weeks, this manager moved on to another role within the organisation. The current manager was appointed in March and has not yet submitted her application to Ofsted to be registered. A lack of thoughtful planning has led to an additional change in manager and some instability in leadership.

Monitoring arrangements, although in place, are ineffective. For example, neither managers nor the independent visitor identified the failure to follow safeguarding processes in relation to a serious safeguarding allegation.

Staff spoken to were positive about training opportunities and the formal and informal support they receive.

There have been a number of changes to the staff team since the last inspection and there are currently two vacancies. The impact of this on children has been mitigated by vacancies being covered by a consistent pool of bank staff. The manager is proactive and is recruiting to fill the remaining vacancies.

The manager has only been in post for a short period of time but has identified areas of development in relation to practice in the home. She has taken action in relation to specific issues of poor practice and has plans to conduct workshops for staff on areas that require additional input. It is too soon for this plan to have been implemented.

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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph 2 requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (2)(a)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)) In particular, ensure that staff understand what action to take when a child makes an allegation against an adult.	19 June 2023
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— uses monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(b) (2)(h))	19 June 2023

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: 2629230

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Stepping Stones Care (Midlands) Limited

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

Responsible individual: Stephen Travis

Registered manager: Simran Matarazzo

Inspector

Janet Fraser, His Majesty's Inspector

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