

2686012

Registered provider: Stepping Stones Care (Midlands 1) Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is privately owned and is registered to provide care for up to three children with emotional and social difficulties.

The registered manager's post has been vacant since October 2023. A new manager was appointed in January 2024 and has submitted an application to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 April 2024

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	requires improvement to be 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: 18 April 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection:

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/04/2023	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Two children were living at the home at the time of the inspection. One of the children has lived at the home for over 18 months and the other child moved to the home four months ago. Both children are settled and are happy with the care and support they are receiving from staff and the manager. They enjoy positive relationships with them and feel loved and valued.

During the inspection, staff and the manager were supporting a third child to visit the home and meet staff and peers. The visit also gave her the opportunity to get a feel of the home and to view her bedroom. Good planning enables children to have a positive experience and reduce some of the anxieties that they might have about moving into a new home.

Two children moved on from the home after living there for over six months. This was sooner than anticipated and their experiences were mixed. Staff and managers have reflected and recognise that at the time they did not have the necessary skills and experience to meet the children's complex needs.

The new manager, with support from the clinical team, has used team meetings, training and supervision to upskill staff. The staff have continued to develop and learn. In addition, the new manager has also recruited more experienced staff. As a result, the staff team is now in a stronger position to meet children's needs consistently well and are doing so. One child said the home now feels like a family home again. He was pleased that he had formed a positive relationship with his peer.

Children, including those who have moved on, made progress considering their starting points. One child has done well with their exams and is looking forward to progressing with his learning at college. Staff support children to join after-school clubs and form friendships with peers outside of the home. Some children had a lovely holiday at the seaside last summer and are looking forward to this year's summer holidays. Children are given opportunities to make some lovely memories that they can cherish.

Children are generally supported well by staff to be healthy. For one child, managers and staff have not considered how they can safely support one child to self-administer medication when he is capable of doing so to further promote his independence skills.

Staff support children to spend quality time with close family and friends. This enables children to maintain positive relationships with those that are important to them and are part of their support network.

The home environment continues to be warm and welcoming, where children can relax and unwind after a day at school or during the weekend. Children personalise their bedrooms and make them their own, which helps to give them a sense of belonging.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

During an unsettled period, staff and the previous manager struggled to manage children's behaviours. Staff were not always effective in de-escalating situations. There was an increase in the use of physical restraints by staff in their bid to keep the children safe.

Children are not always spoken with after a restraint incident to talk about what happened and have the opportunity to raise any concerns. Managers have not identified this as part of their monitoring activities. In addition, managers do not fully evaluate the effectiveness of the restraint. This is a missed opportunity to help staff reflect on and develop their practice when needed.

Children living at the home now get on well. There was a period when the children who lived at the home previously were unkind to each other. Staff did not always respond promptly and this affected some children's experiences living at the home during this time.

When children make allegations of harm against staff, managers inform social workers and the local authority designated officer. They seek advice and follow due process. However, managers do not always notify Ofsted and this does not enable the regulator to keep abreast of what is happening in the home.

The new manager has reviewed children's safety plans in liaison with social workers. This has been positive and is enabling children to be able to take age-appropriate risks and is supporting them to develop their independence skills.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Senior managers reflect and learn. Following an unsettled period, managers recognised that staff needed further support and training to develop their skills and confidence. This has now been implemented and has had a positive impact on the quality of care being provided to children.

Senior managers recognise that at times staff were not supported consistently well. Although staff morale was affected, staff did not raise concerns about this and the lack of support. All staff have revisited the whistle-blowing policy and have been reminded of their responsibility to raise any worries and that it is appropriate to do so.

The new manager in post is child-focused and has extensive skills, experience and qualifications. She has promptly put in place effective monitoring and review systems. This helps her to understand the strengths and needs of the home and make plans to develop the service. Staff and children feel well supported, valued and heard by this manager.

Staff have received training from the manager and clinical team to support them to understand why the children are in their care and how they can best support them. Staff work with the children and involve them in making decisions about their care. Children are receptive to this and are responding well to the support in place and are achieving positive outcomes.

A social worker fed back that although there had been some staff turnover, senior managers and the new manager had managed this well and with the children in mind. The social worker is confident that their child receives good care and remains happy and settled living at the home.

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 positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; communicate to each child expectations about the child's behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child's age and understanding; understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children; de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children. (Regulation 11 (1)(c) (2)(a)(iv)(v)(viii)(ix)(xi))	28 June 2024
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— details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure;	28 June 2024

details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; 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)(ii)(iv)(v)(vii)(c))	
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there. (Regulation 40 (4)(c))	28 June 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children who wish to keep and take their own medication should be supported to, if they are able to do so safely. Staff should be mindful that children holding their own prescribed medication must only use it for themselves in accordance with the prescription. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.16)

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: 2686012

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Stepping Stones Care (Midlands 1) Limited

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

Responsible individual: Nikita Tidswell

Registered manager: Post Vacant

Inspector

Rumbi Mangoma, Social Care Inspector

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