

SC005567

Registered provider: Stepping Stones Children's Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is run by a large private provider. It provides care and accommodation for up to four children. The manager has been registered with Ofsted since September 2013.

Inspection dates: 25 to 26 April 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers requires improvement to be good

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

Date of last inspection: 17 January 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/01/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
09/05/2017	Full	Good
18/10/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
12/04/2016	Full	Requires improvement

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. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— (a) that staff— (vii) are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12(2)(a)(vii)) In particular, that the concerns about the care being delivered at the home which causes harm or puts children at risk of harm are notified to the appropriate members of senior staff within the home and the appropriate agencies outside of the home without delay.	04/06/2018
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— (a) helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and (b) promotes their welfare. (2) In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— (d) ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; (e) ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; (f) understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; (g) demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— (i) research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; and (ii) feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and	04/06/2018

(h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13(1)(a)(b) and (2)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h))	
Restraint in relation to a child is only permitted for the purpose of preventing— (a) injury to any person (including the child); (b) serious damage to the property of any person (including the child) (2) Restraint in relation to a child must be necessary and proportionate. (Regulation 20 (1)(a)(b) and (2))	04/06/2018
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out— (a) how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home; and (b) the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. (2) The registered person must keep the behaviour management policy under review and, where appropriate, revise it. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b)(2))	04/06/2018

Recommendations

- Regulations 35-39 detail the records that must be kept in children's homes. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3) In particular, ensure accurate, succinct and evaluation record-keeping.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

There are currently two children living at the home. One child has lived here for approximately two and a half years and has made good progress from her initial starting point. A social worker said: 'It has been a good placement for her and that is why she's made the progress she has.' The child said that this is a good home and gave it 10 out of 10. A child who came to live at the home in January 2018 is also making good progress from his initial starting point. The social worker said: 'Given the level of need, he is doing well. I have been impressed with their [staff] appropriateness and their commitment to him.'

Children have a range of very complex and challenging needs that include attachment difficulties. Consequently, this makes it extremely difficult for children to build trusting relationships. However, the support they receive enables them, over time, to form positive relationships with key carers. This allows children to open up and talk through

their problems. For example, one child was very proud to show the inspector his 'bag of worries'. He explained how he writes his worries down and puts them in the bag; staff then talk to him about these worries, and this helps reduce his anxieties. As a result, children become more settled and are supported to overcome their emotional difficulties.

Children have made good educational progress from their starting points. Staff work well with educational professionals to ensure that children are provided with positive educational opportunities. This is strengthened by staff transporting one child a long distance to help maintain their attendance at the school they were attending prior to placement.

Both children receive regular therapy to support their emotional and psychological well-being. Staff also meet regularly with the organisation's clinical team to discuss children's presenting needs. This ensures that staff are able to address any areas of concern. Staff spoken to demonstrate a good understanding of the impact of attachment, which enables them to respond to children's emotional needs.

Children enjoy a range of social and recreational opportunities within the local community. This provides them with the opportunity to improve their self-esteem and social interactions. Examples include Beavers, trampolining and street dance.

Weekly house meetings, key-work sessions and informal chats ensure that children can share their views and opinions. Children know how to make a complaint should they feel the need to do so. Staff fully support children's contact with their families. This ensures that important attachments are maintained and children's sense of identity is fully promoted.

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

Clear risk assessments provide guidance to staff on how to manage each child's identified risks. These are regularly reviewed to ensure that they are up to date. Good staffing levels mean that children do not go missing from the home.

Children's difficulties in relation to their traumatic histories often manifest themselves through episodes of violence and aggressive behaviour. Staff mostly manage these incidents well. However, on one occasion staff did not follow the organisation's own model of practice, by restricting a child's liberty. This poor practice was challenged through disciplinary procedures. A member of staff, who had been seconded from another of the organisation's homes, used the whistle-blowing procedures to raise their concerns. Nevertheless, there was a delay of five days before they raised their concerns to management. This delay potentially compromised children's welfare and safety.

The incident was referred to the designated officer and placing authority for their consideration. The manager conducted an internal investigation. However, the records inspected were inconclusive. The manager did rectify this on the second day of the inspection, by completing a full report. The designated officer said, '[name of the

manager] is really, really good at keeping in touch. He is always very appropriate.'

The numbers of restraints have reduced for some children, while there has been an increase for others. However, the records of restraint do not always provide a good overview of de-escalation techniques used and creative alternative strategies. Furthermore, the records are handwritten and information at times is illegible. This impedes both the manager's and inspector's ability to fully review staff practice.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The home operates in line with its statement of purpose. However, since the interim inspection, there has been further instability and changes in staffing. The two new staff recruited left soon after taking up post. There has been an over-reliance on the use of bank staff, and staff from the organisation's other homes, to fill the gaps in the rota. There is an ongoing recruitment drive, and a member of staff who left to go travelling is returning to work at the home. A member of staff said, 'Consistency is very difficult at the moment due to the staffing.' The manager confirmed that they have put a hold on placing a third child until the home is fully staffed.

Staff confirm that the manager and his deputy are very supportive. The team builds effective working relationships with families, social workers and other professionals to secure positive outcomes for children. Professionals spoken to during the inspection were very complimentary about the care and support that children receive.

Practice is monitored through regular supervision and appraisals. Staff also benefit from frequent team meetings. The majority of staff hold a suitable childcare qualification and are very experienced. However, more needs to be done to build a strong and stable staff team.

Monthly monitoring visits are undertaken by an independent person. They review the quality of care and make recommendations to help improve practice. As part of the home's ongoing development, a recommendation was made at the last inspection to review each measure of control against alternative measures. However, the manager has not made use of his monitoring to critique or analyse the high number of restraints. This is a missed opportunity to reflect on what has worked well or not, and if any lessons can be learned to improve practice.

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.

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: SC005567

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Stepping Stones Children's Services Limited

Registered provider address: Maybrook House, 2nd Floor, Queensway, Halesowen, Worcestershire B63 4AH

Responsible individual: Sylvia Eboigbe

Registered manager: Simon Bottomley

Inspector

Michelle Bacon, social care inspector

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