

SC008490

Registered provider: Stepping Stones Children's Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is privately owned and managed.

Inspection dates: 5 and 7 July 2017

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

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

Date of last inspection: 28 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection

None.

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- The home provides young people with a good standard of high-quality care that contributes to change and improvement in their lives.
- Young people make good progress taking into account their individual starting points across all aspects of their physical, social, emotional and behavioural development. They benefit from well-planned, highly individualised care that promotes their needs effectively.
- Risks associated with young people are well known and understood by staff. Their safety is consistently at the centre of staff practice irrespective of the challenges this presents. Young people become increasingly safer as a result of the actions that staff take to support and protect them. They are kept safe and have a strong sense of personal safety.
- Young people's views are central to all aspects of how the home operates and develops its practice. Young people are involved in key decisions and are able to influence and contribute to the running of the home. Young people have effective role models in staff they look up to and learn from. Their views about the home and their relationships with staff are consistently positive.
- Staff provide young people with positive experiences that enrich their lives. Young people take part in a range of constructive and enjoyable activities. They make friendships and develop their social skills, interests and hobbies as a result of their engagement and participation.
- Young people benefit from a home that is managed efficiently and effectively. The registered manager leads staff by example and channels their efforts effectively. Staff are well managed, supported and led. They share and implement the home's ethos, approach and philosophy in caring for young people and work hard to achieve the best outcomes possible for them.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/02/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
26/07/2016	Full	Good
11/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
18/06/2015	Full	Requires improvement

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

There have been no new admissions or placement disruptions since the last inspection. Young people benefit from continuity of care and have stability and consistency in their lives. Young people enjoy exceptionally good relationships with staff, with whom they sustain their positive attachments. They benefit from effective, high-quality support that contributes to change and improvement in their lives.

Young people make good progress taking into account their individual starting points across all aspects of their physical, social, emotional and behavioural development. They benefit from well-planned, highly personalised care that promotes their needs effectively. A young person reported, 'I'm going on holiday because I've behaved myself. I've lived here for almost four years. I didn't like it at first but now I do. The staff have found out how to look after me and they know what's best for me... They've helped me change everything... I used to go missing a lot, take drugs and drink alcohol and now I don't do any of that. I'd describe the home as being understanding, homely and caring.'

Young people attend school or alternative educational provision with good support and encouragement from staff. The home maintains highly effective partnerships with the providers of young people's education to promote their regular attendance, attainment and educational achievement. One young person has recently started an apprenticeship and is gaining valuable work experience. Staff consistently have high aspirations for young people and provide the support they need to pursue their career aspirations, training and educational goals.

The home provides young people with a study area and any equipment they may need to support their learning, such as books, the use of the internet and a personal computer. Staff assist young people with homework and show a genuine interest in their progress, achievements and learning. A headteacher reported, 'School has an excellent relationship with the home. There is regular communication and the children's home take a proactive approach in supporting the pupils at school. The attendance from pupils averages close to 100%. All pupils are always dressed in full uniform and well presented. The home's investment in their pupils is exceptional and this has been evident with a Year 11 pupil who has secured an apprenticeship placement.'

Young people take part in a range of positive and enjoyable activities, both at home and in the wider community. They make friendships and develop their social skills, interests and hobbies. Young people benefit from contact with their friends and families. Consequently, they sustain their close relationships with the people who are most important to them. Young people know how to make a complaint and their rights are promoted effectively. They have access to an independent advocate should they need an advocate to make representations on their behalf.

There are effective arrangements to promote young people's good health. Young people are registered with a doctor, dentist and optician and have access to these services

when they need them. This includes access to therapeutic support to promote their emotional and psychological well-being. Young people are taught about key health issues and are encouraged to lead and maintain a healthy and active lifestyle. Young people make informed lifestyle decisions and learn to take responsibility for their own health. Medical consent is in place and staff are clear about what types of health decisions and responsibilities are delegated to them.

The home's medication procedures have been reviewed since the last inspection. This was following the occurrence of an incident in which staff administered the wrong medication in error. Staff have attended medication training and the registered manager has since improved and strengthened the home's medication procedures to ensure that medication is stored and administered safely. Medication procedures are now more robust and this minimises the risk of young people suffering harm.

Staff spend quality time with young people and encourage their full and meaningful participation in the running of the home. This enables young people to have a say in how they are cared for and contribute to how their home is managed and run. Young people benefit from regular key-work sessions and receive good support on a range of relevant issues that enable them to make sense of what's going on in their lives and work through any issues they may have. As a result, young people develop their resilience, knowledge and self-confidence. A young person reported, 'It's good here. It's very enjoyable and staff are very kind to you. Everyone is treated the same and no one feels left out. I'd give the home nine out of ten. My previous placement was a one. Nobody is perfect and everyone can make improvements... I'm happy to stay here. This placement's very good for a young person having bad times being in care. This place can help them.'

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

Staff consistently have the safety and well-being of young people at the centre of their practice, irrespective of the challenges this presents. They have a good understanding of their specific needs and vulnerabilities and take appropriate action to address them. Risks associated with young people are well known and understood by staff. Young people are kept safe. Consequently, they develop a strong sense of personal safety.

Young people are protected from abuse and all other forms of significant harm. Staff employed to work with vulnerable young people are selected and vetted carefully. This ensures that young people are protected from unsuitable people. Visitors to the home are closely chaperoned and there is suitable monitoring of such people.

Staff are trained in child protection so they know how to deal with allegations and report suspected abuse. Staff are familiar with their safeguarding roles and responsibilities and demonstrate a good understanding of safe working practice. Allegations of abuse are handled quickly and professionally to keep young people safe from harm. Significant incidents are reported to the appropriate authorities to ensure that young people benefit from effective help, support and protection from those staff charged with a duty to protect young people. Staff maintain effective partnerships with the police, social

workers and other safeguarding agencies to promote the safety and well-being of young people.

The frequency with which young people go missing or are absent without authority has reduced considerably. Young people rarely go missing, and if they do, there are effective procedures and arrangements to secure their safe and quick return. Staff promote and encourage the development of young people's positive behaviour. They understand how their feelings and emotions can be communicated through their behaviour. They anticipate issues and help young people to resolve their conflicts positively. As a result, young people receive the help and support they need to self-regulate their own feelings and behaviours safely.

The use of sanctions as a consequence for unacceptable behaviour is kept to an absolute minimum. Where sanctions are used, they are fair and proportionate and encourage young people to reflect on their behaviour. The use of restraint, if used at all, is only ever used as a last resort to protect young people from actual harm. The registered manager oversees all behaviour management practices and ensures that staff are responsible and accountable for their practice.

Young people benefit from a very supportive, caring and nurturing environment. Staff are consistent in their behaviour management approach. As a result, young people understand what the rules and boundaries are and respond appropriately, knowing that staff genuinely have their best interests at heart. It was clear from speaking to young people that they feel that staff genuinely care and want what's best for them. One young person reported, 'They're strict here but it's more about our health and safety. They're good staff and they care about the safety of me and others. The staff here watch you. In my previous placement, they didn't because they didn't care.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home was judged to have improved effectiveness at the last interim inspection. There were no requirements or recommendations made at that time. The home is judged to continue to meet the aims and objectives as set out in its statement of purpose. The home provides a high-quality service for young people that contributes to change and improvement in their lives. The home can demonstrate the positive difference and impact it has made to the lives of young people. An independent reviewing officer reported, 'I currently have two children at the home. The reports I have received from all professionals, school and parents and from my visits is very positive. The children's needs are being addressed in a considered therapeutic approach. The home contributes suitably to the children looked after review meetings, and is able to identify which therapeutic models they use, how they are implemented and assess how this may impact on the child. The children's safety is discussed and additional support and staff have been put in place if the child is assessed to be at risk, specifically in the community. The children I represent have made good progress, which has enabled the authority in one of my cases to start planning for the child to be returned to a therapeutic foster placement.'

The home benefits from a well-qualified, passionate and ambitious registered manager who demonstrates strong and effective leadership of the operations of the home. The manager stimulates staff's enthusiasm and channels their efforts effectively. Staff are managed effectively and are well supported and led. Staff benefit from appraisal of their practice and have regular, professional high-quality supervision. Most staff are appropriately qualified and those without a relevant qualification are being trained. As a result, the training needs of individual staff are identified and met.

Staff benefit from appropriate training that enables them to develop their knowledge and skills in caring for young people and meeting their specific needs. Staff work closely together and attend regular team meetings to review the progress that young people make and the outcomes they are likely to achieve. Young people's plans and progress are regularly monitored and reviewed. There are effective systems for reviewing and improving the standard and quality of young people's care.

The home is visited on a regular basis by a person employed who is completely independent of the home. They scrutinise the performance of the home and its arrangements to safeguard young people and promote their well-being. Any actions raised by the independent visitor are appropriately addressed by the home. Reports are sent to the home and Ofsted, as regulations require. The manager makes good use of the home's internal and external monitoring activities. They have a good understanding of the home's strengths and weaknesses and take appropriate action to secure improvement.

Young people benefit from a physically safe, appropriately secure, warm, comfortable and homely environment. Staff have recently redecorated the home in consultation with young people. One of two bathrooms has been completely renovated for young people's use and the other washing facilities available within the home are soon to be completed. Health and safety matters are addressed effectively to ensure that a safe environment is maintained for young people, staff and visitors to the home. The home is not distinguishable from other local properties and fits in well with the surrounding homes. As a result, young people are not stigmatised by the appearance of their home.

There are no breaches in regulation. Consequently, there are no requirements or made as a result of this inspection.

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 difference 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: SC008490

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Stepping Stones Children's Services Limited

Registered provider address: Keys Group, Hurstwood Court, Rawtensall, Rossendale, Lancashire BB4 6HR

Responsible individual: Julie Hamilton

Registered manager: Claire Brady

Inspector

Anthony Kyem, social care regulatory inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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