

SC028868

Registered provider: Step-A-Side Company Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private company and it provides care and accommodation for up to four children with social, emotional and behavioural needs. The registered manager has been in post since July 2023.

At the time of the inspection, 2 children were living at the home.

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 December 2025

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

Date of last inspection: 23 October 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/10/2024	Full	Good
15/08/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
06/12/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
03/08/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff value children and they have developed meaningful relationships with them based on mutual respect and trust. Children like living at the home and they are confident that staff will keep them safe, listen to their views, and promote their wishes and feelings. Staff are keen to learn about children's interests and aspirations. This motivates children to participate in positive activities, for example music lessons and driving lessons.

Staff support children's education, recognising that it can enhance children's life prospects. One child received school awards for their efforts and academic progress. Another child struggled to attend school for several months but participated in educational activities during this period. Owing to staff's encouragement, they returned to school and completed their exams, and staff have supported them to select a college course. A third child lived at the home and they attended a local construction college.

Staff support children to attend health appointments, engage with specialists and take their medication. They work with children to agree plans and strategies related to their medication administration and aids. For one child, there has been a marked difference in their communication skills and emotional literacy since they worked with speech and language therapists. This has coincided with a reduction in the number of incidents. Staff support children to improve their diets, and they have created a gym in the garage to promote exercise.

The registered manager and staff work hard to develop trusting relationships with children's families. Social workers praised staff for helping children to remain connected with the people they love. The registered manager has instigated increased family time by working collaboratively with social workers to devise safety plans that take account of children's wishes, ages and transition plans. Parents are fond of the staff and they are happy with the progress their children have made.

One child has moved out of the home since the last inspection. While they made good progress living at the home, this was not sustained when they moved to another home within the company. The child has sometimes sought support from the registered manager, and she has responded appropriately, providing them with a sense of safety during periods of crisis.

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

Staff understand that the children require opportunities to talk with trusted adults in order to make sense of their lived experiences and to address confusion about their identity. They encourage children to engage with the in-house therapist, and they respond calmly when children make disclosures, verbalise intrusive thoughts and share their fears. Staff skilfully navigate emotive topics and help children to understand healthy

boundaries and safe behaviours. They are empathetic towards children, demonstrating that they care.

The registered manager and staff work closely with the in-house therapist to explore the function behind children's behaviours. They devise strategies that support the children to calm when they experience high levels of anxiety and distress. Consequently, there has only been one physical intervention since the last inspection, and this was necessary and proportionate. Incidents of children going missing from home are rare, but when they occur, staff respond appropriately by notifying parents and professionals.

Staff have a good understanding of children's vulnerabilities and risks and the impact these could have on their peers and people in the community. They monitor children's behaviour to ensure interactions are safe and highlight inappropriate behaviour, educating children through conversations while listening to their views. When necessary, staff escalate concerns to the registered manager, and she works with external professionals to determine next steps.

Staff empower children to use their voice, and they take their complaints seriously. For example, one child stated that they wished to make a complaint about their peers due to some unrest in the home. A staff member supported the child to write their complaint, which was lodged with the registered manager. She responded appropriately, helping the child to understand her decision-making and actions. Any complaints made about staff are thoroughly investigated.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is ambitious for the children and has high expectations of the staff. She is a child-focused and critically reflective practitioner. She supports staff development through supervision sessions, training, direct observations, team meetings and modelling good practice. Staff describe the registered manager as 'dedicated' and 'approachable', and they feel inspired by her leadership.

The registered manager skilfully balances collaborative working and respectful challenge. She is a fierce advocate for the children and takes steps to raise concerns when she believes external professionals are falling short of their duties towards the children. For example, she challenged a school about their practices and outlined how these negatively impacted the child. This resulted in system changes and an apology, giving the child confidence to return to school.

Parents and professionals respect the registered manager and the staff. The registered manager uses her influence to secure improved outcomes for children. For instance, she challenged the local authority's approach to one child's health needs and pushed for greater collaborative working and transparency. In order to ensure that staff could meet the child's needs and prognosis, she sourced specialist training from a charity. She also ensured the child could attend an overseas school trip by organising training for the school and devising a robust safety plan.

Staff are extremely caring and committed to the children. They are keen to develop their skills and embark on new training. The registered manager has supported staff to initiate projects that benefit the children. Two projects are underway, and these involve exercise and forest school. Other projects and specialist training will commence in 2026. The registered manager and staff are proactive care givers who persistently seek to improve their practice and the quality of care delivered to children.

No requirements or recommendations were made during this inspection.

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: SC028868

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Step-A-Side Company Limited

Registered provider address: 29 Market Place, Coleford, Gloucestershire GL16 8AA

Responsible individual: Rachel Carwardine

Registered manager: Jenny Davis

Inspector:

Tara Webb, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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