

2623962

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by the local authority. It provides care for up to three children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

There are three children living in the home. All children were spoken to during the inspection.

The manager registered with Ofsted in October 2023.

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 March 2025

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: 20 February 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/02/2024	Full	Good
08/03/2023	Full	Good
12/07/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff create an environment where children can build safe and trusting relationships with the adults who care for them. The children all identify members of the staff team who they would seek out should they need their help. Staff support the children's relationships with each other. The children enjoy living together and can work out their differences when they arise.

Managers and staff know the children well and work hard to maintain a safe and supportive environment for children to live in. They have shown resilience when faced with supporting children with challenging situations. One child said, 'The best thing about living at this home is being able to return to a place of stability.'

The manager has revised the home's children's guide in consultation with children. Children have helped to improve the quality of the guide so it's more relatable for others. Children feel proud for doing so and valued for their contributions.

The staff give the children confidence to engage in education or employment. However, children's progress in education varies. When children are not attending school, the managers and staff at the home advocate for them to have access to education, training or employment that is supportive of their needs. This has helped one child return to school after a lengthy absence.

Staff support children to identify activities that they would like to do, and they plan and budget for them. The wide variety of opportunities ensures that children have enjoyable experiences and gain useful life skills in unfamiliar surroundings.

Managers and staff advocate for the right supportive plan for children who are transitioning to independence and ensure that the children's voice is heard. All children are supported to learn new skills. Older children do structured work with their key workers to develop their independence skills in preparation for life beyond the home.

Staff support children to engage with the health services that they need. Children have access to specialist support from agencies such as the substance misuse services and the therapeutic team. The looked-after children's nurse visits the home and delivers educational sessions with the children on topics that include sexual health and contraception. Additionally, staff sensitively help children overcome fears and attend their health appointments. This helps affirm with children that the staff care about their well-being.

The staff and managers support the children using therapeutic parenting techniques. They help children manage their emotions by being available to them when things become challenging. As a result, children have greater confidence in adults to help them through challenging times.

The manager monitors the effect of family time on the children and takes steps to reduce the impact these relationships can have. Staff offer emotional support with family relationships, to help maintain the children's important relationships.

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

Staff help the children to feel safe and protected by working proactively to identify and address areas of risk. Where children are at risk of harm, action is taken to reduce that risk. The staff understand the children's risks and explore them in key-work sessions. This is helping children develop their own keeping safe strategies. This includes staff helping children to engage with other agencies to reduce risks, for example work with children who are at risk of being criminalised by incidents in the community.

Unsafe incidents continue to occur for some children. However, overall, risks are reducing for the children. When there are serious incidents, staff are there to give assurances to children that they will continue to be there for them.

Missing-from-home incidents have reduced for all children. Individualised safety plans are kept up to date to guide staff on the actions they should take. This helps staff respond effectively when children go missing and return them home safely.

The staff understand the risks and opportunities that the internet holds for the children. Installed software helps to manage these risks. The children understand these restrictions and the reasons for them. Staff support children to keep safe online through educational conversations, to help children identify unsafe situations.

Staff and managers understand the children's behaviours and help the children to better understand them themselves. The staff take a balanced approach to addressing children's negative behaviours, which reduces the likelihood of these behaviours escalating. Staff work with children to develop their own plan about the strategies that help them the most. Plans are shared with the child's wider network of professionals to promote consistency for children.

Physical interventions are rarely used, when they are it is as a last resort. Staff use their relationships and their understanding of the children to deescalate situations in order to avoid using holds.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is established in her role. She has good oversight of the quality of care for children. Effective monthly audits of the children's documentation support this oversight. The Manager's oversight comments on the children's records are personalised to the children. The manager values external scrutiny of the home by the independent person and makes use of the challenge this provides to support the development of care provided.

Leaders and managers learn from practice. When there has been an incident, a 'lessons learned' review is undertaken, involving input from outside agencies if required. The manager has developed positive working relationships with colleagues from a variety of services. Feedback from professionals shows that the manager works effectively, to maintain these relationships in the best interest of meeting the children's needs.

The manager attends meetings and strongly advocates on behalf of children if she feels that a child is not being listened to, or the plan is not in that child's best interest.

The manager has reduced the impact of staff turnover by using regular agency workers and staff from the provider's other homes effectively. One regular agency worker has recently converted to become a permanent staff member, helping to strengthen the team.

Practice-related supervision is regular and contains opportunities for staff to reflect on their practice. Staff report that they are well supported by the manager and enjoy working at the home. The team also benefits from clinical supervision from colleagues in the therapeutic team, as and when needed. The staff team and the manager have group supervision as part of the monthly team meeting to undertake appreciative enquiry exercises for all the children. This enables the staff to reflect and gain ideas and feedback from their colleagues.

The staff have access to a comprehensive training offer from their induction, and onwards through their career. There are opportunities to progress within the organisation using the provider's 'grow your own' strategy. This helps develop an aspirational culture.

The physical environment is homely, well maintained and safe. There is continued investment to improve the quality of the environment and enhance the children's living experience. Leaders and the manager have a clear vision for the home and are driving forward developments.

Key-work sessions and other recordings clearly reflect the day-to-day experiences of children. The children's achievements are celebrated using weekly books, memory boxes and memory books.

The manager has high expectations of the staff, encouraging them to start a staff book club to share therapeutic parenting books and resources and supporting them to expand their knowledge and skills. The staff feel empowered to make suggestions and are invested in the improvement of the service.

Information about this inspection

The inspector has 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: 2623962

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Registered provider address: Fostering & Adoption Team, Spectrum 8, Spectrum Business Park, Seaham SR7 7TT

Responsible individual: Paul Rudd

Registered manager: Victoria Green

Inspector

Kirstie Sutherland, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked-after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

© Crown copyright 2025