

2623962

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a local authority. It provides care for up to 3 children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

At the time of the inspection, one child was living in the home, and they were spoken with by the inspector.

The registered manager post has been vacant since July 2025. There is an interim manager overseeing the home, but they have not applied to register with Ofsted.

Inspection date: 13 January 2026

Date of last inspection: 28 October 2025

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

The inspector has looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

Due to a high turnover of staff over recent months, there have been lots of new faces for the child to get to know, affecting the child's ability to form meaningful relationships. The child has found it difficult to share their thoughts and feelings when needed. However, leaders have now recruited permanent members of staff, who are settling into the team. The staff have started to build relationships with the child, and this has led to improvements in the child's emotional wellbeing.

The child is not currently accessing formal education. However, the child has been engaging with a tutor in the home. The interim manager is working with professionals to agree on a plan that will meet the child's specific learning needs. In the meantime, staff are helping the child explore different career opportunities for their future.

The interim manager's oversight of the child's care is effective, and they work well with external agencies to safeguard the child. When shortfalls in practice occur, they are addressed swiftly, and staff are helped to reflect and learn.

The interim manager has established positive relationships with staff and is held in high regard. They have made significant improvements to documentation and the quality of recording. Records are written in a child-centred manner, using language that reflects the positive relationships the child has with staff.

There continue to be concerns relating to episodes of the child going missing from home, substance misuse and alcohol misuse. There has been a reduction in these incidents, and the child appears happy and content living at the home. However, during an incident in which the child was suspected to have misused alcohol, staff did not follow procedure and check on the child's welfare. This could have left any adverse reaction to alcohol unsupported.

The child's plans are updated when needed and staff are made aware of the changes. Staff follow agreed strategies when difficult situations occur. This has led to improved behaviour management practices. Staff no longer use monetary consequences but reflect with the child after incidents of unwanted behaviour occur. They are focused on trying to help the child learn better ways of expressing themselves.

The child has a virtual memory book that they help to update with the new experiences that they have. Included are pictures of shopping trips and enjoyable activities with staff. Memories are also captured through videos that show the child's positive interactions with staff.

Since the last inspection, there have been improvements to the home environment, with new furniture being purchased and an uplift of the decor, particularly in the lounge areas. The child was consulted about the changes and had a say in the improvements, giving them a sense of ownership in the home.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/10/2025	Full	Requires improvement to be good
11/03/2025	Full	Good
20/02/2024	Full	Good
08/03/2023	Full	Good

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, The 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. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and; are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii))	10 March 2026

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: Post vacant

Inspector

Gary Smithson, Social Care Inspector

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