

2623962

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is operated and managed by a local authority. It provides care for up to three children who experience social and emotional difficulties.

The manager was registered with Ofsted in October 2023.

Three children were living in the home at the time of this inspection.

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 February 2024

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

Date of last inspection: 8 March 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

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

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since living at the home, children have made progress. Staff work at each child's pace, and they are proactive in supporting the children to develop from their starting points. The manager captures progress made within the children's care plans. One child said, 'Staff have supported me to take care of myself; before I didn't.'

Children are engaging in education, and the manager strongly advocates on behalf of the children about their education plans. Staff sensitively support children who find it difficult to access education. Staff celebrate children's achievements and proud moments. Children talk about what they want to achieve and the steps needed. This supports children to have aspirations, reach their academic potential and achieve their goals.

Children say that they like living in the home. Professionals and important people in the children's lives echo this. One social worker said, '[Name of child] feels safe there.' Staff speak about the children in a warm and caring manner. They take time to get to know the children, which results in staff providing personalised care and support to each of the children.

Children can name trusted adults that they are able to speak to about any worries or issues that they may have. When children become upset or experience difficulties, staff offer reassurances. One child said, '[Name of staff member] zoomed to get me and gave me a hug.' This helps children to feel safe and supported by the staff caring for them.

The manager involves the children in decision-making about the home. This includes staff engaging children in house meetings. The manager considers their views and takes action; for example, children no longer sign for their pocket money. This supports children to feel listened to and that their views are valued.

Furthermore, if a new child is to move into the home, staff seek the children's views about the new child at the earliest opportunity. The manager gives careful consideration about the new child to make sure that their admission to the home has a limited impact on the existing children. This helps children to build positive relationships with one another.

Staff seek to build relationships with the children's family and friends. Family members feel that they can approach staff to discuss the needs of the children. Staff support the children to spend time with those important to them. They also seek children's views about their relationships with their family and friends. If there are any concerns raised, the staff team escalates these concerns. This supports children to maintain close bonds and understand healthy relationships.

The house is homely, and the children contribute to the decoration ideas. One child proudly said that they designed the lounge area. However, the garden is significantly overgrown, and the children have been unable to use the outside space for several months. Children have made suggestions about how to utilise the space, but these ideas are yet to be implemented.

The children have memory books to show their time at the home. These are in the early stages of development, and some key moments are not captured effectively.

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

Children have personalised safety plans, which the manager keeps under close review. Staff have a strong understanding of the reasons behind children's behaviours. Additionally, staff help children to understand the risks they face. Staff plan sessions to speak to the children to help educate them, and they seek support from partner agencies. Children say that they can contribute to their plans and understand them. This has led to a reduction in risks, for example by reducing substance use.

For those older children, staff help them to develop independence skills, both practical and emotional. The manager ensures that staff support addresses realistic worries, such as loneliness. They aim to broaden the children's network of support. This helps to prepare children for the future.

Staff rarely have to guide or hold children. When physical intervention is needed, staff use guides to ensure the safety of children. Staff use personalised strategies to de-escalate situations effectively. When children struggle to manage their emotions and behaviours, staff discuss these incidents with the children and support them to articulate their feelings. The staff seek to understand the triggers so that they can support the children. The manager reviews incidents quickly. She highlights lessons learned, including what went well. As a result, significant incidents are rare.

Staff take an interest in the children's lives. When children go missing from home, staff search for them and try to locate them. Staff work alongside partner agencies and important people in the children's lives. Staff welcome children when they return. This means that children rarely go missing from the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has high ambitions for the children. She has a vision of what she would like to achieve to improve the outcomes for the children in her care. She cascades this through the staff team. This ensures children receive care from staff who want the best for them. One staff member said:

'I am extremely proud and lucky to be part of the team, as I feel collectively, we are making positive long-term changes for our young people, which will hopefully support and benefit them in the future.'

Staff feel supported by managers. The manager ensures that staff have opportunities to develop. She supports them to take on progression tasks at a pace that is suited to them. This enables staff to feel valued, which results in positive outcomes for the care provided to children. One staff member said, 'She is a true leader who fosters strong relationships with individuals and the full team alike. She is constantly working hard to ensure that we all reach our full potential.'

Staff access a range of training. The manager makes sure that the staff's training is up to date. Additionally, the manager proactively searches for extra training for staff. She personalises this to areas of interest and the needs of the children. Staff embed the training they receive into their everyday practice. This includes recognising the impact a child's past experiences can have on them today. This means that skilled and knowledgeable staff care for the children.

The manager has effective monitoring tools in place. This enables her to address any shortfalls promptly. Additionally, the manager uses her auditing tools to track progress for the children and the service to inform her action plan. The managers are aware of areas for development and have plans to address them. The manager values feedback from others to inform practice. This means she strives to improve the home and care given to the children.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; and use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— provide to children living in the home the physical necessities they need in order to live there comfortably; ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(vii)(c)(i)) In particular, ensure that the garden is accessible for children to use.	1 May 2024

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff keep, and encourage children to keep, appropriate memorabilia of their time spent living at the home and help them record significant life events. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 14.5)

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: 2623962

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Registered provider address: County Hall, Durham City, Durham DH1 5UJ

Responsible individual: Paul Rudd

Registered manager: Victoria Green

Inspector

Jess Elliott, Social Care Inspector

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