

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 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 during the inspection.

There has been no registered manager in post since July 2025. An acting manager is managing the home. They have applied to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 April 2026

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: 28 October 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

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

Summary of findings

The child manages their emotions more safely since the last inspection, and this has contributed to the progress they have made. They enjoy spending time with staff. The child has structured routines that support their progress, including improved school attendance and enrolment on a college course. Missing-from-home episodes have reduced, and safeguarding responses are generally effective. Some risk management strategies require greater clarity. However, leadership is strong, with effective oversight and partnership working. There is a nurturing culture that supports the child's progress, despite periods of staffing disruption.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The child engages in enjoyable activities with staff and seeks them out to spend time in their company. Staff encourage the child to try new things, such as using colouring books to help them remain calm. This has had a positive effect on the child, who has developed a better understanding of their emotions as a result. The child can express their emotions and feelings more appropriately. When there are occasions where this has not gone well, the child is able to reflect on where things went wrong. Individualised plans have helped staff better understand the child. This has encouraged staff to see past behaviour that challenges and the reasons for it. This has helped the child feel understood and well cared for.

Since the last inspection, the child has experienced some disruption due to staffing changes. At times, this has affected the child's ability to build trusting relationships. However, as staffing arrangements have become more stable, the child's progress and emotional wellbeing have improved.

The child has been supported to re-engage with education and has achieved excellent attendance in the most recent school term. This is significant progress for the child and demonstrates the positive effect of having a structured routine and trusting relationships with staff. Furthermore, the child has been helped by staff to enrol on their preferred course at the college they wish to attend.

Staff advocate well on the child's behalf. Staff have secured referrals for specialist assessment of the child's needs, and the manager has ensured that the child is supported to attend appointments. This means the child will receive the appropriate support to meet their identified and emerging needs.

Records are consistently maintained and reflect nurturing, child-centred care. Records of the day are written with warmth and positivity, demonstrating that staff spend meaningful time with the child, reinforcing the child's sense of belonging and self-worth.

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

Missing-from-home episodes have reduced significantly. When the child does go missing, staff take all reasonable steps to locate them promptly and follow agreed procedures to return them home safely. When concerns arose following a peer-related event, staff made a timely and well-planned decision to remove the child overnight for their safety and to reduce the immediate risk. This ensured that the child was not exposed to any potential harm.

Work is ongoing to support the child to better understand and manage risk. Staff continue to engage the child in discussions about safety and decision-making and demonstrate persistence in this work. Risks are identified and understood by staff, particularly those linked to peers and potential exploitation. Although known risks have reduced, staff remain vigilant to the ongoing risk of future involvement. Some concerns remain, including substance misuse and uncertainty around peer influence.

Incidents of behaviour that challenges are reviewed effectively, and staff are supported through discussions to reflect on their practice. The child is also encouraged to reflect following incidents, which has supported their understanding of their emotions, helping them to develop safer coping strategies.

Staff work well with external agencies. Concerns are shared promptly and proactively, and communication with the social worker is positive. This practice has also supported the social worker to improve their relationship with the child through staff's guidance. This has helped to progress the child's relationship with professionals.

Medical advice is not always appropriately sought in response to health concerns about substance misuse. Seeking medical advice has at times been based on interpretation of the plan rather than following the agreed protocol. Furthermore, staff do not always use professional curiosity when assessing risk. On one occasion, this led to staff not fully considering the information at hand, preventing them from taking appropriate action to avoid a potentially unsafe situation for the child.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The provider has been actively recruiting for a new manager since the registered manager left. There is now a new manager in post. Before the new manager applied to register, there were interim management arrangements in place. The new manager is having a positive effect on the team and the child's experiences.

Senior leaders provide appropriate support to the manager. Additional management capacity has been introduced to support the team, particularly during a period of staff changes and the induction of new team members. This has improved leadership oversight and stability.

The manager's monitoring systems that support their oversight of the quality of care are effective. The manager has a clear understanding of the team's strengths and areas for development and uses this oversight to make improvements.

Leadership and management are effective and support positive outcomes for the child. The manager has a detailed and well-developed understanding of the child's needs and has built a positive and trusting relationship with them. This understanding has informed practice in the home and has supported staff to respond consistently and effectively, contributing to a reduction in the child's risks.

The manager challenges care-planning decisions effectively. Their collaborative work with partner agencies has contributed to improving outcomes for the child. For example, the child has been supported to access their preferred education placement for college. This demonstrates a strong commitment to promoting the child's future opportunities.

The manager maintains realistic yet aspirational expectations for the child and promotes a positive culture in the home that reflects this approach. This supports the child to make progress while feeling understood and supported.

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))	25 June 2026

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: 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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