

2729914

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is operated by a local authority. It provides care for one child, who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

The home and manager registered with Ofsted in April 2023. The manager was absent from the home at the time of the inspection and there were interim management arrangements in place.

One child was living at the home at the time of the inspection. The inspector spoke with the child.

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 November 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 6 January 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/01/2025	Full	Outstanding
08/01/2024	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Staff understand the child's needs exceptionally well. They speak of the child with warm regard and proudly celebrate the child's achievements. The child has formed positive, trusting relationships with staff and these have been pivotal in promoting significant progress from the child's starting point. One professional said: '[name of child] has made brilliant progress. I can't praise the staff enough.'

Effective joined-up working between staff and health professionals has resulted in great improvements to the child's health. Their help has enhanced the child's ability to identify and meet their own health needs. Furthermore, the child has developed their ability to share their worries and concerns with trusted adults and professionals. One health professional said: 'There has been a huge change. We had lots of worries when [name of child] first moved to the home, these have massively reduced.'

Staff work collaboratively with education professionals to identify the right provision for the child. This has led to a significantly improved attitude to education and excellent attendance. Staff are skilled at identifying opportunities for informal learning outside of education and these have helped to enhance the child's knowledge and skills. An education professional praised the ability of staff to help the child recognise and realise their aspirations.

Staff plan extensively to promote the child's independence skills. Records of the support sessions are comprehensive and highlight achievements and milestones. The child has developed the practical skills and resilience needed to navigate the challenges of adult life. Staff are committed to ensuring that the next move for the child is the right one to help the child's trajectory continue.

Staff provide opportunities for the child to access a broad range of activities, interests and hobbies. They are strong and committed advocates for the child's views, wishes and feelings and ensure that the child's aspirations are supported and shared with relevant others. Staff have supported the child to broaden their social network and maintain friendships, increasing the child's confidence and self-esteem.

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

Staff have important discussions with the child that help to identify risks to their safety and address these effectively. Their approach has resulted in a significant reduction in risk-related behaviours. Thorough management oversight and analysis of incidents identify learning opportunities that are discussed as a team.

Staff understand the child's individual risks and vulnerabilities. Risk assessments are thorough and identify all known risks, giving staff guidance on how to reduce risks of harm.

Missing-from-home incidents are rare. When these have occurred, staff follow an agreed protocol and make every effort to search for and locate the child. When the child returns to the home, they are welcomed back warmly, and staff enable them to reflect on any reasons for being away from home. This has established the child's confidence in staff in knowing they will be there for them.

When serious incidents occur, staff respond appropriately to keep the child safe. Physical intervention is used proportionately, and incidents are clearly recorded. The written accounts describe efforts staff make to avoid the necessity to hold the child. Records of conversations are comprehensive and demonstrate how staff reflect with the child on their experiences to learn new ways of managing future situations. This has helped the child to develop safer coping strategies.

Staff focus on positive re-enforcement and celebrating achievements. Since the last inspection, there has been one consequence given to the child to address unwanted behaviour. This was fully discussed with the child and alternative responses discussed. High-quality restorative conversations have helped the child to understand the effect of their behaviour on others and nurtured the child's ability to reflect and learn.

Room searches take place appropriately to safeguard the child. Staff explained to the child that these may need to happen to keep them safe. However, not enough is done afterwards to help the child understand staff's actions to keep them safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Managers make use of monitoring tools to help maintain a full view of staff performance and identify areas for improvement. Regular development days help to keep staff focused on individual and team development.

Practice-related supervision sessions take place regularly and allow staff to reflect on their practice and the child's progress. Training is prioritised and gives staff specific focus to enhance their skills. Staff said they value the training opportunities available and feel that they have contributed to their ability to meet the child's needs.

Team meetings provide staff with a forum to discuss and agree a consistent approach to the care they give to the child. Staff discuss topics such as incidents, safeguarding and care planning. Daily discussions enable staff to explore decision-making in a healthy way. Staff say that their views influence the care in the home. This helps them to feel fulfilled in their roles and strive for continuous improvement.

Professional feedback is very positive about the team. Managers and staff work well with external professionals to support the care they give to the child. When there are shortfalls in professional responses to the child's needs, managers escalate concerns effectively.

Interim management arrangements have mitigated the effect of the manager's absence from the home. However, further consideration could have been given about how to manage changes to this role.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that they lead the home in a way that delivers the ethos, outcomes and approach set out in the home's statement of purpose. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 52, paragraph 10.4)
- The registered person should ensure that a child's bedroom is only searched if the child has been informed or asked for their permission. Immediate searching may be necessary where there are reasonable grounds for believing that there is a risk to the child's or another person's safety or wellbeing. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 16, paragraph 3.20)

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: 2729914

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Registered provider address: Spectrum 8, Spectrum Business Park, Seaham SR7 7TT

Responsible individual: Paul Rudd

Registered manager: Anita Rutkauskaite

Inspector

Mark Cryer, Social Care Inspector

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M1 2WD

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