

2805013

Registered provider: Darlington Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home registered with Ofsted in December 2024 and is owned and managed by a local authority. It provides care for up to three children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

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

Inspection dates: 30 April and 1 May 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: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are making good progress. Staff know and understand the children's needs. This is because some staff have quickly established good relationships with children. One professional said, 'Although [name of child] has not been there long, his self-esteem and confidence have improved since he moved to the home.' Children are happy living in this home.

All children are registered with the relevant health providers. When there have been gaps in children getting access to vital health care, the staff work closely with family members to ensure that health needs are addressed at a pace that suits the child. Staff are responsive to children's emotional well-being, and they support them to access specialist services when needed. This means that children's physical and emotional health needs are prioritised appropriately.

Children are supported with their education. When there have been attendance concerns, staff work with education providers to help this improve. Staff use incentives to help improve attendance and attainment at education. Staff communicate with children's education and learning providers daily. This helps children to have more settled days when they attend education.

When children move into the home this is done in a planned way. The manager completes an assessment of each child's needs to ensure that staff are able to meet those needs effectively. Professionals and family members are involved in the planning process. This ensures that staff have a better understanding of the child's needs before they move in. Children participate in welcoming new children to the home. Children have positive relationships with one another.

Family members are encouraged to be involved in their children's lives, and staff communicate with them regularly. Children can go on holidays and activities with their family when this is appropriate. Family members speak highly of staff. One family member said, 'They keep me up to date and actively involved.' This helps to maintain those important relationships and improves outcomes for children.

Staff support children to prepare for adulthood. Children are learning life-skills such as cooking and travelling independently. However, not all children are supported to have a clean and tidy bedroom. This could impact a child's independence skills, self-esteem and have health implications if not addressed.

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

There is a safeguarding culture in the home. Children's risks are well understood by staff and staff respond in line with children's risk assessments. This means that there are few safeguarding incidents and children feel safe living in the home.

Staff are professionally curious when addressing and exploring children's risks. For example, when children leave the home late at night, staff will go with them to ascertain where they are going. Staff try and encourage children to return home and continue to look for them if they go missing from home. Furthermore, when there are risks related to exploitation or substance misuse, staff are vigilant to behaviour children might display and try to identify patterns and trends. Children have access to specialist support to try and reduce those risks. As a result, staff have been able to gather a better understanding of the children's individual vulnerabilities.

Staff know how to respond to children when they are upset. This means that the use of physical intervention is rare. Staff use effective de-escalation techniques and incentives to reinforce appropriate behaviour. The registered manager thinks carefully about a restorative approach and helps children to understand their behaviour.

The manager listens carefully to children when they raise concerns about staff and completes a thorough investigation. The child is kept up to date throughout that investigation and provided with an outcome at the end. The manager then supports the children and staff to rebuild any broken-down relationships at a pace that is best for the child. This keeps children safe, helps them to feel listened to and supports them to develop trust in those caring for them.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is suitably experienced and qualified. The manager is aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the home, and she has a plan in place for future developments.

Staff feel supported by their manager and say she is caring and approachable. Regular reflective and meaningful supervision takes place that helps staff to consider how well they meet the needs of children. Staff well-being is a priority also. They receive extra support during difficult times, and staff value that support. Staff morale is high, and no staff have left the home.

Staff receive a comprehensive induction. New staff complete shadowing shifts with experienced staff before working independently with children. This enables new staff to get to know the children and start to build good foundations for their relationships.

The manager works closely with professionals and escalates any concerns she has related to children's care planning. As a result, children have been able to access alternative and more suitable education settings that will better meet their needs. The home gathers feedback from professionals, who have said 'The staff are friendly, and they do an excellent job of caring for children.'

There is effective management oversight. The manager has her own tools and resources to evaluate staff practice. This helps her to ensure the safety and well-being of the

children. There have been significant changes to paperwork and processes, and this has reduced the workload of staff, providing them with more quality time with children.

The manager has a strong focus on improving the quality of care for the children and promptly addresses any issues with staff practice. This helps provide consistent care and boundaries for children that help them to feel more secure. She has high expectations for what children can achieve and helps them to achieve their aspirations. For example, one child has built their own pc, and the manager is arranging for them to spend some time with the local authority IT team to gain valuable work experience. This is helping him to prepare for his future career.

The manager uses the organisation's training and resources to develop the staff team. This has enabled staff to have a better understanding of the children's needs and behaviour, linking this in with research-informed practice. Although this is new for the staff, initial indications show that this has been helpful.

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

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure a child's bedroom should not generally be entered without their permission, though it may be necessary to establish routines to allow for rooms to be cleaned regularly. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.20)

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: 2805013

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered Provider: Darlington Borough Council

Registered provider address: Darlington Borough Council, Town Hall, Feethams,
Darlington DL1 5QT

Responsible individual: Christopher Bell

Registered manager: Lisa Porritt

Inspector

Laura Roberts, 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