

SC000820

Registered provider: Pear Tree Projects Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a private organisation. It is registered to provide care for up to five children who may experience social and/or emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in 2008. He holds a suitable qualification for this role.

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 November 2022

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: 15 September 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/09/2021	Full	Good
08/10/2019	Full	Good
31/07/2018	Full	Good
13/02/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children live in a home which is inviting, warm and spacious. The children's presence is seen and felt throughout the home. Their belongings and many photos of the enjoyable times they have had are evident throughout. In discussion with the inspector, one child said that they rated the home '1000 out of 10'. Children are clearly settled and feel very comfortable in their home.

Children have very good relationships with the staff. Staff provide nurturing and supportive care. They form strong relationships with the children, who feel that staff care about them, their safety and well-being. The children are helped to process their early life experiences and learn to trust adults again.

Children make progress in many areas with the help of a diverse team of staff who are knowledgeable and skilled. One child's progress is described by a professional as 'amazing'. Another child is described as having 'blossomed' since moving into the home.

All children have excellent school attendance and engage well with their teachers. This is significant progress for one child, whose engagement is said by a teacher to be 'fantastic'. The team of staff are described as being 'very supportive' and their communication is described as 'excellent'. Children are encouraged by staff to value education and understand how it will benefit them. This helps children to achieve their educational potential.

Children are helped to develop relationships with members of their family, some of whom they have not seen for many years. This promotes children's sense of identity and belonging. Families are welcomed into the home and supported by staff, which is greatly appreciated by them.

Children are encouraged and supported to attend health appointments. This helps to meet their health needs. Staff help the children to lead healthy lifestyles. They eat a balanced diet and take part in physical activities, such as walking and horse riding. Children are supported by staff to learn about healthy choices and to understand how positive choices support good health.

Measures are used to help children learn and understand how unwanted behaviour impacts them and others around them. Children's views are obtained about the fairness of these measures, and the manager scrutinises this practice. However, there are some occasions when financial penalties are imposed on children. This has not proven effective and is not restorative practice.

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

Staff have a very good understanding of the children's risks. They are assisted by

comprehensive risk assessments and care plans. These are regularly updated by the children's key workers, who know them particularly well. Documents provide clear guidance around how to help the children and meet their needs. However, out-of-date information in one child's risk assessment had not been removed. This could result in inconsistent care being given to the children, especially for those staff who do not always work at this home and are therefore not as familiar with the children.

Staff follow individualised missing-from-home protocols, which ensures that appropriate action is taken when children go missing. Staff actively look for children, which helps to reduce the time they are missing and means that they are better protected. However, the language in one record is critical of the child. This does not help children to feel cared for or understood.

Children are rarely restrained. Restraints only take place as a last resort and by staff who are appropriately trained. Debriefs take place with children, which enables them to be heard and receive support. Children are helped to empathise and learn how their actions can affect others. They are now better able to reflect, and this represents progress for some.

A significant amount of work is carried out with the children on a frequent basis in both a planned way and as and when needed, such as after an incident. Staff also support children to complete training on how to keep themselves safe and make safer choices. However, the record of this work is not always clear and lacks details of who has been involved and when. This makes it difficult for the manager to have full oversight of such work.

When a child makes an allegation or complaint, they are taken seriously, and staff know what to do. Swift action is taken by the managers, who carefully consider all the information and inform the appropriate agencies. This helps to safeguard children. Discussions take place with children so that they understand what is happening during the process and they are informed of the outcome. This helps children to feel listened to and valued.

Staff have completed all mandatory safeguarding training. They regularly refresh their knowledge and develop additional skills through a programme of ongoing training in response to children's needs and emerging behaviours. Learning obtained is shared with the team, which helps to upskill the whole staff team and therefore better meet the needs of the children.

Measures are in place and followed to ensure that new staff are recruited safely. This prevents unsuitable people from being recruited to work with the children in this home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is committed and dedicated. He has an excellent understanding of the children, their needs and how to meet them, which he shares

with the whole staff team. He is instrumental in all aspects of the running of the home and has full oversight of the care of the children. The manager scrutinises incidents and decisions made about the children to ensure that action taken by staff is appropriate, proportionate and fair. Where it is not, he takes robust action.

The manager attends important meetings about the children. A professional described his contributions as 'really valued'. He is protective of the children and advocates on their behalf by ensuring that their best interests are promoted and requesting meetings to address issues about their care.

During regular supervision and team meetings, the children are discussed in detail and staff's contributions about their care are welcomed and acted on. This helps staff to feel valued. The manager is supported by an experienced and very capable deputy and they both attend the daily handovers. As a result, issues or concerns can be dealt with quickly. This forum, along with email correspondence, helps to ensure that the team of staff have a shared understanding and can provide a consistent approach to the children.

Staff feel supported by one another and the management team, who they can go to whenever they need help or advice regarding work or personal issues. Supervision and debriefs are reflective, which gives staff the time and opportunity to think and learn. Staff find this particularly helpful in their development.

Children only move into the home when it has been determined by leaders and managers that their needs can be met. A risk assessment considers the effect on the child as well as the children already living in the home. Areas of concern are identified, and actions are put in place to reduce the potential for an increase in risk.

Managers take great care to ensure that children's transitions into the home are positive. They talk to the adults who really know the children and obtain key information, such as their likes and dislikes, daily routines and what is important to them. This ensures that children's needs continue to be met, which is incredibly important during what is likely to be a particularly difficult time. Children's belongings are obtained and placed in their bedrooms in readiness for them moving in. This helps to give children a sense of normality and familiarity. One child, who has recently moved into the home said, 'Everyone has been so welcoming.'

There has been a failure to notify Ofsted of one serious incident and several others have been received with delay. This oversight has prevented Ofsted from having a timely understanding of these incidents and being assured that all the necessary actions have been taken to safeguard 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(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, 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
No measure of control or discipline which is excessive, unreasonable or contrary to paragraph (2) may be used in relation to any child. The following measures may not be used to discipline any child— imposing a financial penalty, other than a requirement for the payment of a reasonable sum (which may be by instalments) by way of reparation. (Regulation 19 (1) (2)(f))	15 December 2022
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— a child is involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; an incident requiring police involvement occurs in relation to a child which the registered person considers to be serious; there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; a child protection enquiry involving a child— is instigated; or concludes (in which case, the notification must include the outcome of the child protection enquiry); or there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(a)(b)(c)(d)(i)(ii)(e))	15 December 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all staff strive to build positive relationships with the children in the home. In particular, language used towards children and recorded on children's files should not be critical of children's behaviours. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.11)
- The registered person should ensure that all children's case records are accurate and signed and dated by the author of each entry. This relates to children's risk assessments and direct work undertaken with children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)

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: SC000820

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Pear Tree Projects Limited

Registered provider address: Peartree House, Bolam, Darlington, County Durham DL2 2UP

Responsible individual: David Bartlett

Registered manager: Sean Cooper

Inspector

Emma Ridley, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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