

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 have social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The registered manager has been in post since 2007 and is appropriately qualified.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 8 and 9 October 2019, to carry out a full inspection. This report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 15 to 16 September 2021

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 October 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/10/2019	Full	Good
31/07/2018	Full	Good
13/02/2018	Full	Good
21/03/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children receive good care and support. They are making progress in all areas of their development, taking account of their individual starting points. Leaders, managers and staff ensure that the children take part in a variety of new experiences and embrace new opportunities. For example, they go horse riding and fishing, and go on holidays. Children take part in these activities with the support of staff. This helps the children to form positive and appropriate relationships with the adults around them.

Children are not always allowed to make choices about what they wear around the house. One independent reviewing officer said, '[Child's name] does feel safe at the home, but does say that they want to move because they cannot wear leggings.' Another said, 'The only issue I have is that [child's name] can't wear jogging bottoms in the home.' The children's requests to wear these items of clothing are not unreasonable and their freedom to explore how they dress is being restricted.

Education is a main focus in the home. All children attend school and are making good progress. The children are proud of their achievements. This helps them to recognise the importance of formal education and the positive impact this has on their future. One teacher said, '[Child's name] is bright and able, and is making good academic progress each year.'

Staff work in partnership with a variety of healthcare specialists, including children's mental health services. This therapeutic input helps children to cope with their thoughts and worries. This enables them to manage their anxieties in a way that best supports them and their development.

All children are taking part in a variety of practical tasks, such as baking, using kitchen appliances and understanding finances. This work is then assessed. Upon its completion, the children receive a recognised qualification. This provides each child with independent living skills for when they leave the home, and supports their confidence and self-esteem as they move towards adulthood.

The staff educate the children on different aspects of equality and diversity. The children have recently learned about different religions, cultures and beliefs. This raises the children's awareness of different religions, giving them an understanding of the cultural views and values of others.

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

All the children's bedroom doors are alarmed, regardless of any risk factors that may compromise their safety and welfare. For some children, the use of these alarms is

unnecessary and intrusive. The blanket use of this surveillance creates an institutionalised environment and not a homely atmosphere.

Staff are not trained to meet some children's bespoke needs or circumstances. Although this does not place the children at risk of harm, the knowledge and specific skill set gained from such training would provide the staff with an in-depth understanding of the children's behaviours. This would better support children's safety and protect them from harm.

Children's key workers regularly review their risk assessments and the registered manager retains oversight of these documents. This ensures that risk assessments remain relevant to the children's individual circumstances and provide staff with clear actions to follow to minimise the risk of harm to the children.

Children rarely go missing from the home. All incidents are managed in line with protocols and the children's personalised risk assessments and support plans. Staff understand the protocols in place and apply these when a child goes missing. Staff maintain positive and professional working relationships with the police and with children's social workers. This ensures that appropriate responses have been agreed and can be applied when a child is missing from the home.

The use of physical restraint is rare. Staff ensure that any use of this measure of control is well documented. Children and staff are debriefed after all incidents. This gives them the opportunity to discuss and reflect on the incident, and allows the registered manager to scrutinise these events to ensure that children are safe and protected from harm.

Children who have access to mobile phones and the internet are helped to keep safe online. The staff recognise the importance of online safety, and educate the children to make safe choices. Consequently, children who have mobile phones do not misuse these and they understand how these devices may increase potential risks to their safety.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the children's progress and the dynamics of the home. They use this knowledge to ensure that children receive personalised care and support that evolve as the children's needs change. This is a positive reflection of the leadership in the home. The registered manager monitors the service effectively to ensure that children continually receive good-quality care and support.

The home has a stable and experienced staff team. This allows the children to build trusting relationships with the staff. One independent reviewing officer said, '[Child's name] has a very good relationship with the team. It's always upbeat in the home. The staff work very well as a team and it shows in the children that are living there.'

Staff receive regular supervision that provides them with the opportunity to reflect on their practice and how this influences children's development, and their own learning needs. Staff said that they are well supported by management, and that the team has a consistent approach to caring for the children. This ensures that the children receive care that is structured and provides them with boundaries. As a result, the children are living in a stable environment.

The registered manager works closely with other professionals. Feedback from professionals is positive and makes specific reference to how the registered manager always maintains effective communications and acts in the best interests of the children. An independent reviewing officer said, 'The registered manager is a good advocate for [child's name], their needs always come first.'

The registered manager is committed to involving the children in the running of the home. Children express their views through a variety of ways, such as general chats with staff, key-work sessions and raising complaints. The registered manager reviews all complaints and quickly acts to resolve these. This means that children's concerns are taken seriously, which shows the children that their views are important.

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 leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph requires the registered person to— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c))	22 October 2021
The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if— the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children. (Regulation 24 (1)(a))	22 October 2021

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that children are supported to express themselves. This is in relation to personal items such as clothing. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.21)

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: Pear Tree House, Bolam, Darlington, County Durham DL2 2UP

Responsible individual: David Bartlett

Registered manager: Sean Cooper

Inspector

Gemma McDonnell, Social Care Inspector

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