

SC007608

Registered provider: Pear Tree Projects Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a private provider. It provides care for up to three children who experience social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in March 2020.

Three children were living in the home at the time of the inspection. The inspector spoke with two of the children during the inspection.

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 October 2023

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: 31 October 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
31/10/2022	Full	Good
01/03/2022	Full	Good
17/12/2019	Full	Good
16/10/2018	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children say they are happy in the home and feel supported by staff. One professional said that staff do an excellent job caring for children. Another described the progress for one child as 'amazing' and said, '[Name of child] has gone from strength to strength, it is lovely to see how she is developing.'

There is a robust admissions process, which involves the manager carrying out an assessment to ensure that all the children's needs can be met. A child said that she was able to visit the home for tea, which allowed her to meet people before moving in. The manager also makes sure that there are several months between each new child moving in. This gives ample time for all the children to adjust to their new circumstances before there is another change.

All the children have experienced many moves before coming to this home. Stability has made a significant difference to their lives. One child has lived in the home for five years. Due to the relationships they have developed with staff, incidents that could impact on their safety have reduced.

Children attend school every day and are learning a variety of subjects on a full-time basis. They go to a school that is run by the same provider and offers a tailored timetable. This means that as well as engaging in traditional subjects, children spend time outside on a farm with animals. The children say that they love the horses and being able to ride and care for them. It is a highlight of their week.

Children's views, wishes and feelings are important. When a child asked for a stress ball to help with their feelings, this was given to them immediately. When children wanted to go camping, staff arranged for them to camp in the back garden, to have a campfire, toast marshmallows and play games together. Another child had a friend come to the home for tea.

Staff also make efforts to ensure that children have everyday experiences and learn new skills. Children's current interests include learning to be a lifesaver, horse riding, swimming lessons, girl guides and dancing.

Most families feel included in their children's lives and receive regular updates from staff. A grandparent said that they have got to know staff really well. When parents do not have such a positive experience, the manager meets with them to try to improve things.

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

Children say they feel safe in the home and staff do all they can to help them. The staff understand the risks that the children face and respond quickly to improve the children's safety. Staff notice changes in the children's moods and behaviour. The

strategies created provide a consistent approach to supporting the children. This helps to reduce the risks and the frequency of incidents that the children may be exposed to.

Staff provide support through discussions to help to educate children. Individualised work covers topics that are relevant to the children, such as online safety or stranger danger. This helps to increase children's knowledge around their personal safety.

Children rarely go missing from home. If they do, the actions taken by staff to find them are appropriate. On one occasion, a member of staff failed to go and collect a child despite knowing their whereabouts. This complaint was dealt with by the manager and included the involvement of the local authority designated officer. The manager shared the learning from this complaint with the staff team to make sure that staff understand their responsibilities to safeguard children.

Recently, there has been an increase in the number of times that children struggle to manage their emotions and behaviour. This coincides with another child moving in, who needs time to adjust to their new home. When children struggle to live harmoniously together, the manager makes sure that more staff work in the home to manage these situations, particularly while children get used to living with each other.

Staff use a combination of methods to promote positive behaviour. They encourage children to make the right choices; for example, children receive rewards. If necessary, staff will use consequences to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on others. This has been successful in reducing the number of incidents.

Staff occasionally hold or guide the children to keep the children and others safe. This is appropriately recorded and reviewed. Staff talk about physical intervention being the absolute last resort after trying other things to distract children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager understands and knows the children well. The manager actively seeks feedback to understand the experiences of the children living in the home. This helps to inform the care and support provided by staff.

The manager has addressed most of the shortfalls found at the last inspection. However, there are still some gaps in the paperwork that should be provided by the child's placing local authority, such as children's care plans. Therefore, this requirement will be restated.

Case records reflect children's daily lives and experiences. However, there is some variation in the detail recorded by staff. Some documents are not always worded in a child-friendly way.

The manager is well supported by deputies who also know the children well and understand their needs. There is a small, dedicated team that has worked at the home for several years. This has allowed staff to develop good working relationships with each other. Staff describe the home as a 'lovely' place to work and say that they feel well supported by everyone.

Extra staff have come to help more recently due to the changes in dynamics and greater challenges in caring for three children. A pool of staff works for the provider, and they can offer support to several homes. The same people have been used to help the staff team, which ensures consistency and stability for children.

There is good multi-agency working, which includes excellent communication between professionals involved with the children. Staff share important information and concerns, which keeps everyone up to date. One social worker commented on the 'great' communication from staff and said that staff are responsive to any issues that arise.

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 registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c))	31 December 2023

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff record information about individual children in a non-stigmatising way. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

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: SC007608

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: Lesley Holywell

Inspector

Miriam Dolman, Social Care Inspector

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