

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.

Two children were living in the home at the time of the inspection. The inspectors spoke with both children during the inspection.

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 September 2024

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: 4 October 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/10/2023	Full	Good
31/10/2022	Full	Good
01/03/2022	Full	Good
17/12/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The children live in this home for a long time. For example, one child has lived there for six years. This gives them stability and allows children to develop good relationships with staff. Children have staff that they can confide in and share their worries with. This helps them to express their views, wishes and feelings.

For one child, their time in the home ended in an unplanned way as they moved back to their family suddenly. They were not able to celebrate and have a proper goodbye with everyone. However, there are plans for the staff to send the child a memory book, a gift and goodbye message. This will ensure that there is a positive end to their time in the home.

There continues to be progress made for all the children in relation to education and learning. One child has now completed their exams and has achieved qualifications. This is a big achievement, particularly as the child was not going into school, and support at home helped them study and prepare for the exams. The other children continue to have high attendance at school and both are doing well and making progress.

Staff support children to increase their independence as they get older. They encourage children to be active in their day-to-day routines and self-care. This is a strength, as children develop skills to be able to look after themselves once they leave to live in their adult homes.

Staff encourage children to pursue their hobbies and interests. Children enjoy spending time with staff and can get involved in a variety of activities to widen their experiences. This includes caring for horses and going on holidays together. This supports the children's social skills and enhances their positive experiences.

Staff take the time to develop relationships with the children's family members who are close to the children. Staff support the children to stay connected and to see important people. This ensures that the children will have support as they grow older. Staff also understand any issues that might affect the children, such as different plans for their siblings. Staff will adjust their care, providing extra support as and when necessary.

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

Staff have a good understanding about the issues that the children are experiencing and that might affect how they are feeling. For example, staff understand the competing factors for one child and their family, and the changing relationship between two of the children at the home. Strategies in place support the children with the challenges that they are experiencing.

There is encouragement for positive behaviour. When two children argue or hit each other, staff intervene when necessary to help the children with their relationship. This includes techniques such as distracting, redirecting, or giving time to children and opportunities to manage their feelings themselves. When firmer intervention is needed, physical guides and holds are used. This is used as a last resort to keep children safe or prevent damage to the home. There is good oversight of these situations by the manager and any learning is identified.

The children are aware of the rules and boundaries and say that these are fair. Staff use consequences to help children understand when their behaviour has not been acceptable. However, these consequences are not always logical, related to the behaviour observed or restorative. This is an area for development.

Children rarely go missing from home, with only one incident since the last inspection. There is a robust procedure in place which staff follow if a child goes missing. This includes the staff trying to find the child. A well-coordinated response means that children can be quickly located and, when found, staff ensure that they are safe and well.

When allegations and complaints have been made, the manager completes an investigation in line with the home's guidance. The manager supports children when they make a complaint and children are made aware of the outcome, which helps them to feel listened to.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There is an experienced manager in place, who manages the home and knows the children well. She looks at the quality of care provided through the monitoring systems. This helps identify areas for improvement. Extra training improves the skills of the staff, ensuring that they can meet children's needs.

Team meetings help discuss strengths and weaknesses. However, the manager's oversight has not identified the continuing inconsistency about how staff write about the children. Some records are child focused and written in a way that is helpful to the child. Others are not and use unhelpful expressions. This was an observation during the last inspection and therefore the recommendation will be reissued.

There is a core team of staff attached to the home who understand the children and know them well. A mobile team also works across the homes in the area. Children have consistency, as the same members of the mobile team work in the same home for a few months at a time. This allows children to get to know who is caring for them and limits the amount of change. The recruitment process ensures that staff have the experience and qualifications to be able to meet the needs of the children.

Training goes beyond the core learning, so that staff receive specific knowledge to help them provide effective care and meet the children's changing needs. An example of this is recent training about bullying, to support two children where there are concerns with

their relationship. This gives staff an opportunity to talk about what else might help the children with their difficulties.

Supervisions take place most of the time. Staff report that they feel supported and can speak about issues. The manager offers appropriate challenge when practice needs to improve. However, some of the supervision sessions lack detail in relation to the issues raised or staff's reflection. This prevents the manager from monitoring and evaluating patterns of concern.

The registered manager has good relationships with other agencies and professionals. She is proactive in escalating any concerns and providing challenge when needed, to improve the experiences for children in the home.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that any consequences used to address poor behaviour should be restorative in nature, to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the staff caring for them and the wider community. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9:38)
- The registered person should ensure that a note of the content and/or outcomes of supervision sessions are kept and to ensure that both the person giving the supervision and staff member have a copy of the record. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.4)
- 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: Peartree House, Bolam, Darlington, County Durham
DL2 2UP

Responsible individual: David Bartlett

Registered manager: Lesley Holywell

Inspectors

Miriam Dolman, Social Care Inspector
Natalie Clark, Social Care Inspector

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