

SC035181

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is operated by a local authority. It provides care for up to 5 children who may experience social or emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in January 2023 but was not present during the inspection. The deputy manager is the acting manager in the registered manager's absence and has been in post for over 6 weeks.

At the time of the inspection, 4 children were living in the home. All children were seen and spoken with during the inspection.

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 May 2026

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: 24 June 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/06/2025	Full	Good
18/06/2024	Full	Good
19/03/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
08/08/2022	Full	Good

Summary of findings

Children are happy and settled in the home. They enjoy positive relationships with staff and have lots of fun. Staff know the children's health needs, likes, dislikes and their family situations, and support children to have their voices heard. Staff enjoy working in the home and provide children with nurturing care. They celebrate the children's achievements and value the support and training provided to them by leaders and managers.

Safeguarding practice is effective. Managers and staff work collaboratively with an array of professionals, and this promotes regular, effective communication that helps children to make progress and be safe.

Some areas of improvement are needed regarding how staff record discussions after incidents, and use of reflective discussions to develop staff practice during supervision sessions. Also, Ofsted is not always notified about serious incidents.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children have trusting relationships with staff. Staff encourage the children to attend school and make progress in their education. The sense of safety children have from living in this home gives them courage to succeed. For example, one child is attending extra classes after school to prepare for important exams. Furthermore, staff communicate with education professionals effectively and have positive working relationships with them, helping to create and maintain consistent responses for the children. This helps to ensure that children have the right support to engage with school.

Staff work with social workers and other carers to ensure that children have regular family time with the people most important to them. For some children, this has progressed to them having unsupervised and overnight stays. Family members praise the approach of the staff and the positive relationships they have with the children. They remark on the progress that children make and value the support that the staff provide with family time.

Managers and staff understand the health needs of the children. Most children are in good physical health. They engage in all routine appointments and are up to date with their immunisations. Children experience consistent care and support, and staff are there for children when they are needed the most, such as when children spend time in hospital.

Children have access to therapeutic support from psychologists and therapists from specialist teams. Staff encourage children to share their worries with them and engage with these services to have the support they need for their mental and emotional health.

Staff respond with care and compassion when children are struggling with their emotional wellbeing.

Staff prepare children for independence at a level appropriate for their age and development. Staff understand that some children may need longer to learn the skills they need and this is well supported. Children enjoy spending time with friends in the local community and can travel independently.

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

Risk assessments and safety plans are individual to the child and managers remove risks appropriately when they reduce. Staff give positive praise to children when this happens, acknowledging the children's achievements, for example improved personal care and reductions in incidents when children become upset or angry.

Managers and staff keep children safe online with a variety of applications and monitoring systems that keep them informed of the content children access. Age-appropriate restrictions are in place. Staff have safeguarding discussions with children to prepare them for using new online devices in a way that helps the child adjust and learn gradually about staying safe online. Furthermore, children enjoy gaming with staff, while learning the positive and negatives of the digital world.

When there was a serious safeguarding incident, the responsible individual has ensured that a thorough investigation has been carried out, engaging with professionals from a variety of agencies to review the evidence. Leaders and managers have acted promptly to minimise any effect on the care of the children or the functioning of the home.

Children are restrained for their safety appropriately and proportionately. Incidents of restraint have reduced. Staff and children are spoken with by a manager after each incident to help them reflect and learn from the event. Staff have follow-up conversations to further explore the child's feelings and help repair relationships. Staff make recordings of interventions in a timely manner. Recordings are written clearly. However, some staff handwrite the discussions they have, and this can be difficult to read and may limit oversight.

Staff respond appropriately to keep children safe when there are incidents of self-injurious behaviour, ensuring that children access the mental health support they need. Staff provide children with emotional warmth and offer reassurance when children experience overwhelming emotions.

Ofsted are not always notified about serious incidents. This limits Ofsted's oversight of the actions taken to keep children safe and be assured that they are effective.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers have a clear vision for a nurturing home where children can feel seen and know that their voice is heard. They understand the building blocks that create a positive environment for children, and they are aware of what needs to improve in the home. This knowledge informs the leadership of the team and contributes to helping children feel well cared for.

The manager has access to information from a variety of sources when they are considering a referral for a new child to move to the home. The manager carefully considers the risks and needs of the children already living in the home alongside the new child. Staff build relationships with children quickly and ensure that essential services for children are in place before they move in.

The children's voice informs decisions that affect their lives and their daily experiences. Children have contributed to the remodelling of parts of the home and plan days out and holiday destinations. When it is not possible to do what the children have requested, the manager has provided feedback as to why this is. This helps children to feel respected.

There is a supportive team culture that helps staff to be effective in their roles. Staff say they love working in the home and making a difference to the children's lives. They celebrate the children's achievements and value the support and training provided to them by managers. New members of staff who join the team comment positively on the quality of the induction they receive, and all staff say they benefit from the support from leaders and managers.

Leaders and managers have focused on improving the quality of practice-related supervision sessions for both the managers and the staff. All staff have completed supervision training at a level relevant for their role. Supervisions are regular and the records are written clearly. However, the opportunities for reflective discussion about the children's needs vary between supervisors and, because of this, the process across the team lacks consistency.

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 notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(e))	3 July 2026

Recommendations

- The registered person should have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- The registered person should ensure that staff understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. Information in all records should be accurate and legible. ('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: SC035181

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Registered provider address: Fostering & Adoption Team, Spectrum 8, Spectrum Business Park, Seaham SR7 7TT

Responsible individual: Paul Rudd

Registered manager: Iain Scott

Inspector

Kirstie Sutherland, Social Care Inspector

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