

SC035181

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and operated by a local authority. It provides care for up to five children who experience social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in February 2023.

At the time of the inspection, two children were living in the home.

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 June 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: 19 March 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/03/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
08/08/2022	Full	Good
11/01/2022	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
28/09/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children build positive and trusting relationships with staff. Managers and staff use a nurturing approach and take time to get to know the children's individual likes and dislikes. This supports children to talk about the things that are important to them.

Both children are accessing full-time education. Staff understand the need for an education, health and care plan for each child. Staff take an active role in the children's education, for example by supporting them to complete homework and visiting potential new schools. This enables children to reach their academic potential. One education professional said that staff, 'Came to parents' evening and [name of child] was buzzing with this, as they have not experienced this.'

Staff help children to access activities that they enjoy. Children go on mini holidays, inclusive of their interests. Staff make photo books to capture these memories for the children to cherish.

Staff engage children in discussions about their behaviour or needs. They listen to children while also providing advice. Staff support children to manage their feelings safely and understand their identity. There is a strong acceptance of the children's chosen identity needs and how these may change. The team of staff utilise the support from partner agencies to better inform their practice. One child is becoming more open about their views and feelings. This means that children make progress in line with their individual plans.

The home conditions have improved since the last inspection. This includes a new kitchen. A sensory room has been created, and one child has been encouraged to choose items for the room. Children have personalised bedrooms in line with their interests. Alarms are fitted to bedroom doors. However, the use of the alarms is not proportionate to the needs of the children and can appear institutionalised.

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

Staff ensure that children have individualised risk assessments and behaviour support plans. They include details about the children's past experiences and how they impact on them currently. The plans give clear detail for staff about children's triggers and observed behaviours. Furthermore, they provide staff with clear guidance on how to support children. This means that children receive a consistent approach from staff.

There is a proactive response by staff when children abscond or are missing from the home. Staff actively search known locations and liaise with partner agencies. This ensures that children return safely to the home.

Managers and staff recognise relationship difficulties between the children. There are discussions with the team to develop a plan to reduce worries and ensure consistency. Children have structured routines in place and clear boundaries. This has led to a reduction in the number of disputes between the children.

Staff only physically hold children when they are at risk of hurting themselves or others. Staff talk to the children about their behaviour. This supports children to reflect on their behaviour. Staff access support from partner agencies to improve their skills on supporting children, for example by engaging in play therapy. This has led to one child remaining calmer.

The managers engage in multi-agency child protection meetings. However, the managers have not notified the regulator of the meeting outcomes. This prevents the regulator from having oversight of significant incidents. Investigations into staff conduct and practice shortfalls identified at the previous inspection remain ongoing.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Staff describe the managers as 'friendly' and 'approachable'. They say that the managers have clear expectations. Staff value the managers sharing their experience with them.

Managers are visible to the children and have developed trusting relationships with them. This supports staff to feel valued and improves the quality of care afforded to the children.

There is now a stable staff team. Staff receive regular supervision sessions. The managers ensure that discussions about the children take place during team meetings. This informs decision-making when it comes to changing the children's plans. This means that staff know the children well and have a clear understanding of their care needs.

Staff access a range of training and guidance from the therapeutic team. This means that staff have the skills and knowledge to meet the needs of the children in their care. The manager has effective monitoring tools that support him to identify shortfalls and take timely action. The managers have addressed all the shortfalls raised at the previous inspection. This means that there is a focus on service improvement to deliver a high level of care to children.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— 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). (Regulation 40 (4)(d)(i)(ii))	15 August 2024

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that the home is a homely and domestic environment. The home must comply with relevant health and safety legislations, such as alarms and food hygiene. However, in doing so, the home should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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 address: County Hall, Durham City, Durham DH1 5UJ

Responsible individual: Paul Rudd

Registered manager: Iain Scott

Inspector

Jess Elliott, Social Care Inspector

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