

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 may experience social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in February 2023.

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

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 June 2025

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: 18 June 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/06/2024	Full	Good
19/03/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
08/08/2022	Full	Good
11/01/2022	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children develop positive relationships with the adults who care for them. The staff understand the needs of each child and the trauma that they have experienced. They offer children warm and nurturing care. They promote the children's individuality and what is important to them. Children say that they know they can speak to any member of staff, not just their key worker.

Staff support children to make progress from their starting points. This is recognised by professionals and the children's parents. This is mainly linked to the children's behavioural incidents reducing. One parent said, '[Name of child] is a different child with their behaviour.' Positive behaviour is further encouraged by staff celebrating the children's achievements and giving them praise regularly.

All children attend full-time education. Staff contribute to the children's personal education plans to ensure that their educational needs are being met. As a result, all children are making academic progress.

Family members speak highly of the care that children receive. They say that staff communicate well with them and keep them informed about their child's progress. This enables children to see those who are most important to them and the staff working together in the children's best interests.

Staff help the children to access a range of activities. They encourage the children to spend time together and enable them to focus on their own individual interests, such as attending the scouts. Staff capture the children's memories in photo books that the children can cherish. Children often request to have them and look back on their enjoyable experiences.

The manager is considerate of the children's needs when a new child moves into the home. When unforeseen difficulties in the group dynamics arise, the staff take appropriate steps to reduce the risks of bullying. Staff engage the children in discussions individually and as a group. This helps children to develop their social skills and work through their difficulties.

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

Staff ensure that risks for each child are clearly captured in the children's risk assessments. Staff understand the risks and actively support children to prevent risks and concerns escalating.

Staff engage children in discussions about the children's behaviours. They listen to the children while also providing them with guidance about acceptable forms of behaviour.

Reflective conversations help children to consider their actions and learn from incidents. As a result, behavioural incidents in the home have reduced.

The need to hold children in this home is reducing. Staff use de-escalation techniques effectively in line with the children's plan in the first instance. Management oversight of incidents helps to identify shortfalls in staff practice when they are present. For example, they identified that a hold was not proportionate to the behaviour displayed. This enables further development for staff to improve their practice when managing unsafe behaviours.

Children do not go missing from this home currently due to the positive relationships that they have with staff. The last incident was several months ago. Appropriate steps are taken when children go missing during the day. However, it is difficult to ascertain what action staff take during the night, due to gaps in the quality of recording. This has not impacted on the children as their whereabouts were often known.

When the need for staff to search children's bedrooms arise, they do so to safeguard the child involved. Staff appropriately dispose of any concerning items. This ensures that children do not have access to items that can harm them.

The manager has not always followed safeguarding procedures. For example, they did not contact the police when a child disclosed being hurt by an adult outside the home. However, on this occasion, there was no significant impact on the child. The responsible individual identified the shortfall and ensured that appropriate action was taken, albeit sometime after the incident occurred.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has a good understanding of the team's strengths and areas for development. The manager recognises when concerns arise in the home, such as the risk of bullying. He reflects on incidents with staff and identifies actions to ensure that concerns do not reoccur.

Staff speak positively about the support from the manager and deputy manager. Staff describe there being an open-door policy that allows them to communicate openly with managers. New staff receive a thorough induction into the home. As a result, new staff can clearly outline the children's needs and procedures to follow to care for them effectively.

The manager and deputy manager are visible to the children and have established positive relationships with children. However, they maintain the need for staff to directly support children in the first instance and empower the staff to do so.

Staff benefit from regular practice-related supervision and team meetings. They focus on the children's needs and have open discussions about the children's plans. This enables a consistent approach to caring for children.

Management oversight of documents varies. Some documents lack clarity and information. For example, care plans refer to a child recently moving into the home, despite them living there for over a year. This means that some documents are not accurate or helpful to the reader or the child should they wish to access their information.

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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(v)(vi))	6 August 2025
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 (1) requires the registered person to— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h))	6 August 2025
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there. (Regulation 40 (4)(c))	6 August 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that they specify the procedures to be followed and the roles and responsibilities of staff when a child is missing or away from the home without permission. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.28)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Information should be accurate and current. ('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 address: Fostering & Adoption Team, Spectrum 8, Spectrum Business Park, Seaham SR7 7TT

Responsible individual: Paul Rudd

Registered manager: Iain Scott

Inspectors

Jess Elliott, Social Care Inspector
Karen Karlsson, Social Care Inspector

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