

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC035220
Inspector	Deborah White
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Durham County Council
Registered person address	County Hall DURHAM DH1 5UL

Responsible individual	Karen Monica Robb
Registered manager	Joan Lesley Inns
Date of last inspection	23/01/2014

Inspection date	09/01/2015
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	There has been no enforcement action since the last inspection.

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	outstanding
Quality of care	outstanding
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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Children receive an extremely high standard of care that meets their needs. They are happy living at the home and have very nurturing relationships with staff. This has significantly improved their ability to build trust and has developed their confidence and self-esteem.

Children are fit and healthy. They have access to the healthcare services they need. In addition, they are supported by a multi-disciplinary team of professional therapists who provide ongoing support and advice. Meals are nutritious and children engage in lots of healthy physical exercise. This promotes healthy growth and development.

Children are listened to and their thoughts, views and wishes are taken seriously. They are safe and emotionally secure. Educational outcomes are very good. All children have significantly progressed from their starting point. All feedback, from social workers and other professionals, for this inspection is consistently positive.

The Registered Manager and staff team are dedicated and committed to improving outcomes for children. They are skilled in caring for younger children who are in crisis. Care-planning is comprehensive and individualised. This ensures children's

needs, wishes and aspirations are met.

Leadership and management at the home is strong. The home is organised and runs efficiently. Staff morale is very good and this positive ethos is clearly demonstrated.

There are no requirements or recommendations following this inspection.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home provides care and accommodation for up to three children. It is registered to care for young people whose main needs arise from emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/01/2014	Interim	good progress
06/08/2013	Full	adequate
13/12/2012	Interim	good progress
11/07/2012	Full	good

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **outstanding**

Children live in a happy, settled home that enables them to develop positive attachments. They have learned it is safe to trust adults they know, which has significantly increased their confidence and emotional security. Children understand, why they live in the children's home and what their future plans are. This helps children make positive life transitions. A social worker said, 'My child's progress is exceptional in every area. They are very happy. Relationships with staff are a key factor in how well my child is doing.'

Children are healthy and their health needs are met. They are registered with local healthcare services and have regular health checks. All children are developing and meeting their growth milestones. Meals are healthy and children enjoy lots of exercise and outdoor activities. Children's emotional and psychological needs are exceptionally well met. They have engaged in age appropriate therapeutic sessions that have significantly impacted on all children's positive progress. An independent reviewing officer said, 'This home has a good balance. It is a lovely home for children and the therapeutic input supports children to move on at their pace. This is vital for these children.'

All children attend school and are achieving their maximum potential; some far beyond expectations. Attendance is very good, which is extraordinary progress from all children's starting point. Children are thriving in their school environment and look forward to learning and having new, educational experiences. Children are able to socialise with school friends and develop hobbies and interests outside of the children's home. This teaches children good interaction skills and the benefits of a good education. These skills will prepare children growing up into adult life. A social worker said, 'I have seen a big change in my child, they have completely turned around. Coming to this home is the best thing that could have happened to them.'

All children see activities as one of the best things about living at the home. They enjoy spontaneous activities, such as football on the village green, as well as a wide range of planned outings and festive treats. Children decide as a group what they would like to do during holidays and weekends, which encourages compromise and consideration of each other's wishes. They also each have individual hobbies and interests that stimulate their thinking, creativity and imagination. A child said, 'We do lots of things. It's good here. I like doing things and football is the best.'

Children are very much part of their local community. They access local amenities and are involved in local events. Relationships with neighbours are positive and friends are made welcome in the home. Children feel included in their locality, which gives them a solid home. A visiting local county councillor said, 'You wouldn't know this is a children's home. The children are part of the community and join in lots of local

events. This is a lovely home and the children always look happy.'

Contact arrangements are known to children and they are supported to maintain relationships with people who are important to them. This nurtures strong emotional links that children need and cherish. It also reinforces children's heritage and knowledge of their background and birth culture.

Quality of care

outstanding

Staff nurture and develop appropriate, caring relationships with children. All staff have a good understanding of the needs of younger children; particularly in relation to the importance of physical touch, affection and a basic human need for comfort. Children are very relaxed with staff and interactions are natural and instinctive. All children speak highly of 'their carers' and respond happily to physical contact. This is a happy home where children feel wanted and cared about. A staff member said, 'One of our children wouldn't have any physical contact when they came. They have now developed trust and love a cuddle.'

The home was set up with the purpose of working with younger children to support them through crisis and trauma in preparation for living in a family home. The results are exceeding expectations and children's progress and development is considerable. An independent reviewing officer said, 'I have known my child for years and this is the most relaxed I have ever seen them. My child is more confident and is more vocal about their views. I am impressed with the home and my child's progress.'

The home operates using a therapeutic model that provides highly individualised care. A knowledgeable, experienced staff team is supported by a multi-disciplinary team of professionals who provide regular access to specialist psychological services. This provides children with an extensive range of interventions that enhance their psychological and emotional well-being. A psychologist said, 'All the staff are on board with how the home works. They all want to be here and that makes a positive team. Staff are very motivated, which is refreshing. The staff fully contribute to excellent outcomes for children.'

Children are consulted and listened to. Consultation is age appropriate and the home has a number of communication aids to help children articulate how they are feeling. Specialist story books appeal to children's attraction to colourful pictures and child friendly text; all children have a large chalkboard in their bedroom where they can draw pictures or write letters to express their thoughts; and night-time routines include each child having one to one time with a member of staff to talk about their day. This quiet, planned time is very important to settle children who have sleeping problems and is often a time when children feel safe to talk about their worries.

Children's meetings and key worker sessions are facilitated and children use these

occasions to talk about how it is to live at the home. Children are consulted about menus, activities and any changes proposed. Outcomes include a child's wish to grow vegetables that resulted in a small vegetable plot in the garden and children have chosen internal décor and what new equipment they would like. This shows children's views are important and are respected.

The staff team are wholly dedicated and committed to the work they do and the children in their care, and actively promote good outcomes. Children's health and well-being is seen as important and all children are developing their self-help and social skills. Staff work closely with schools and have supported children in school to maintain educational placements. A social worker said, 'My child has improved and is attending school. This is down to support from the staff and staff working with my child's teacher. This is an excellent team.'

Staff have very good working relationships with families, placing social workers and other professionals. Feedback gathered for this inspection is highly complimentary. Care-planning is purposeful and children's needs; background and future plans are seen as paramount. Staff actively contribute to regular multi-agency care team meetings and written reports are of a high quality. All professionals consulted say communication with staff is excellent.

The team work over and above expectations with very good results. This home makes a difference to children's lives and lays a strong foundation for each child to increase their likelihood of successfully moving onto a permanent placement. A social worker said. 'My child has made so much progress. Their behaviour has improved so much. All previous difficult behaviours have stopped, this is amazing.'

Keeping children and young people safe good

Children are safe and feel safe. Good staffing levels ensure children are safely observed and supervised at all times. All social workers consulted say their children live in a safe home. There have been no children missing and no incidents of bullying. Staff know children's historic or potential risk taking behaviours and strategies are in place to either reduce or, in most instances, prevent harm or injury. This keeps children safe. There have been no complaints and children know they can talk to staff or their social worker if they are worried about anything.

There have been no child protection referrals or concerns. Staff receive regular safeguarding training and know what to do if they are worried about a child's well-being. Robust procedures, which are known to staff, provide good safeguarding guidance and advice. These measures create a good overarching culture that promotes safe outcomes for children. A social worker said, 'My child's care is planned and monitored. They have progressed and are very happy and safe.'

Behaviour is managed positively. Restraints are only used as a last resort and for the

right reasons. Staff are skilled in a number of behaviour management techniques to help children understand their behaviours and how their behaviours link to early life experiences. Positive incentives are used effectively, which makes children feel good about themselves and their progress. Children's achievements and progress are recognised and celebrated. Children are very proud of their awards and school achievement certificates.

Children live in a safe environment. Safe recruitment practices ensure safety checks are carried out on all staff. These are monitored by the provider and the Registered Manager. All visitors to the home are checked and vetted. This protects children from potential abusers. All utilities are regularly checked and serviced; routine fire safety checks are undertaken.

Leadership and management

good

The Registered Manager is an experienced childcare practitioner who has a long career history in children's residential care. She has the right qualifications to effectively undertake her management responsibilities. The Registered Manager continually updates her knowledge and skills. As a result, the home is very well managed and provides children with a stable environment.

There are no previous requirements or recommendations.

The Registered Manager leads a committed, dedicated staff team who put children at the centre of what they do. All staff speak very highly of leaders and managers and feel very well supported. Staff morale is very good. Feedback for this inspection, from social workers and other professionals, highlights the management and staff team as one of the best things about the home. The positive attitude of all staff is reflected in the very good outcomes for children. A staff member said, 'This is a great place to work. We all get on well and the manager is great. We will do anything to support the manager, she works hard and wants the best for the children. We all feel the same way, the children are what matter.'

All staff receive in-house training from a qualified psychologist and other therapeutic professionals in how to work effectively with children who have attachment issues. Staff practice and testimony demonstrates a very good awareness of the children's needs and staff are confident in delivering high-quality care. A staff member said, 'I have learned so much since coming here. I better understand how behaviours link to past experience. This has made a big difference to how I look after the children.' All statutory training is current and there are systems in place to ensure important training is regularly updated or refreshed.

The Statement of Purpose sets out what the home intends to do to improve children's lives and future prospects. This comprehensively informs parents and

placing social workers who place children. All statutory placement reviews are held as and when required. This ensures children are living in a home that meets their needs.

Regular monitoring provides planned, systematic checks on the home's operation and outcomes for children. The Registered Manager has a good oversight of the home's performance, strengths and weaknesses. Children, parents and social workers are consulted and their views are seen as important. Staff contribute their thoughts and ideas to the monitoring and improvement plans, which provides purposeful objectives and actions to continually evaluate and improve outcomes. A county councillor said, 'The home is very nice. The manager is wonderful, very thorough and knows how to run a home. The team are professional at all times.'

Children's case notes are organised and reflect each child's life at the home. Records are stored securely, which protects children's confidentiality. There is a wide range of age appropriate, child-friendly documents included in case files that engages younger children. This invites children to participate in their care and shares an understanding of their background and why they live in a children's home.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.