

SC035220

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is managed by a local authority. It provides care for up to three children who may experience social and emotional difficulties and who may have learning disabilities.

The manager registered with Ofsted in November 2022.

Three children were living in the home at the time of this inspection.

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 July 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: 26 February 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/02/2025	Full	Good
13/02/2024	Full	Good
25/07/2022	Full	Good
12/04/2022	Full	Inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children develop trusting relationships with the adults caring for them and enjoy living in this home. One child said, 'It's fun, and we do lots of fun things.' Staff speak about the children warmly and celebrate each child's personality when talking about them. This results in children receiving personalised care.

Staff support children's long-term care plans of moving to a foster family. They ensure that children have a positive experience of leaving the home. Staff prepare children to leave in a way that they understand and hold a leaving party to celebrate their time living at the home. Furthermore, staff give reassurance to those children who remain in the home, offering them comfort to ensure that they feel cared for and loved.

Careful consideration is given to children moving into the home. Managers ensure that there is a planned transition, which includes the child and parents. Staff support children already living in the home, through social stories and discussions, to understand the changes occurring.

Children make progress from their starting points, even those new to living in the home. For example, one child's speech is developing, children have developed self-care skills, and for others, behavioural incidents have reduced. Staff engage children in discussions and activities linked to their care plans. They listen to children while also providing age-appropriate advice and guidance.

Education is a priority in this home. Some children have excellent or improved attendance. For those not in education, managers tenaciously escalate and challenge plans for children. There is close liaison with educational professionals. One professional said, 'In a good way, they are constantly on our case about [name of child]'s education.' When school is not accessible, staff engage children in creative educational activities.

Staff ensure that the children's health needs are consistently met. Outcomes identified in statutory health assessments are strictly followed. They ensure that children access the services needed to support their health needs.

The home is personalised to the children and includes their photos throughout. Children enjoy spending time in different areas, such as the sensory shed. All children's bedrooms are reflective of their interests and offer them a comfortable space to relax.

Staff and managers work closely with partner agencies. Professionals highlight that there is effective communication. Additionally, staff forge positive relationships with children's families. One parent said, 'They look after [name of child], and I couldn't ask for more.' The staff's connection with family members enables children to see parents and carers working together in their best interests.

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

Staff and managers know each child's needs and risks affecting them. Senior leaders have worked to streamline the children's care and safety plans. This has ensured that these plans only contain relevant information and give staff clear guidance to follow. Managers provide oversight of how staff use these plans so that children receive consistent and effective care that keeps them safe.

The team has reflected on behaviour management strategies following the shortfalls raised at the previous inspection. Staff have benefited from refresher training in de-escalation techniques and record-keeping. This has enabled changes in the approaches staff use to manage behaviour, which staff speak positively about. As a result, behavioural incidents are reducing in severity and frequency for children. There is less need to hold children for their safety. Managers and senior leaders provide oversight of any interventions, which supports reflective practice and learning from incidents.

Children benefit from structured routines and boundaries that are individualised to their needs. They experience a nurturing approach that guides them through their day to reduce the likelihood of unwanted behaviour and upset.

There have been no incidents of missing from home, or complaints or concerns raised about staff's practice. This is because children feel safe in the care of staff. However, staff remain aware of the procedural expectations should a concern arise.

Managers follow safe recruitment practice to ensure that only suitable people join the team to care for the children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has been away from the home. Oversight by the deputy manager, supported by senior leaders, has mitigated any impact for children in the manager's absence. This has helped to maintain consistency for the children and staff. The deputy manager has embedded improved changes in practice during this time, helping to improve the quality of care afforded to children.

Managers ensure that the action plan for the service is progressing. Some aspects are complete, and others remain ongoing. Effective monitoring systems identify any aspects that need to be addressed, such as changes to care plans or escalation if needed. This enables continuous service development to better support the outcomes for children.

Partner agencies give positive feedback regarding the quality of care afforded to children and the progress that they have made. Open lines of communication between the managers and external professionals help to coordinate the help and support children receive.

Staff benefit from regular practice-related supervision sessions and team meetings. They reflect on incidents and discuss each child in detail. This promotes consistency in their practice and a collective consideration of how to overcome challenges. The managers address any practice shortfalls in staff supervision sessions to enable staff to reflect on their practice and make improvements.

No requirements or recommendations were raised following this inspection.

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: SC035220

Registered provider: Durham County Council

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

Responsible individual: Paul Rudd

Registered manager: Paula Murtha

Inspector

Jess Elliott, Social Care Inspector

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