

SC035235

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 and managed by a local authority. It provides care for up to three children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

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

The manager registered with Ofsted in April 2025.

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 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: 27 November 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
27/11/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
22/05/2024	Full	Inadequate
06/02/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
27/09/2022	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The inspectors spoke with both children during the inspection.

Staff provide the children with personalised care. They understand each child's differing needs and how their early life experiences can affect them. Staff speak about the children in a warm and compassionate manner. Children develop positive and trusting relationships with staff and can speak to them about any concerns they may have.

Effective information gathering equips the manager with all the necessary information ahead of children moving to the home. The manager carries out a comprehensive assessment that considers the child's needs, the children living in the home and staff's skills to inform her decision-making about the child's suitability. Staff prepare children for the new children moving in. Furthermore, they ensure that the child moving in is encouraged to visit the home beforehand, and staff attend key events, such as the child's birthday party. This helps children to develop early relationships and settle in quickly.

Consistent boundaries and structured routines help children make progress. This is helping to reduce behavioural incidents for one child. In addition, staff engage children in discussions about their care plans to ensure that they are involved in decision-making. Staff regularly praise the children's achievements and reward them for their hard work.

Staff encourage children to engage in activities of interest and have new experiences, such as taking part in a dance competition. Staff take photos of these events to capture the children's enjoyment, and they share these with the children to help them cherish their memories.

The manager and staff forge positive relationships with the children's parents. Effective communication between them provides consistency for children. Parents speak positively about the quality of care afforded to their children. One parent said, '[Name of child] is doing fantastic, and I can speak to staff when I need to.'

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

Staff ensure that children's plans are personalised, regularly reviewed and updated. Plans give context to the children's needs and what staff should do to keep them safe. The manager facilitates discussions in team meetings about the children's plans to ensure that they receive consistent responses. This helps staff to keep children safe.

Missing-from-home incidents are reducing due to the positive relationships staff develop with the children. There have been no recent incidents. However, staff remain vigilant and confident in what action they must take should an incident arise.

The manager has oversight of incidents between the children. This enables her to identify whether staff are taking sufficient steps to help children work things out or if there are greater safeguarding concerns, including bullying behaviour. Reflective discussions guide staff on how to help children live together harmoniously.

Staff provide children with proportionate consequences when unwanted behaviour occurs. They engage children in reflective discussions about their behaviours. This helps children to learn and develop more positive ways of managing their emotions. As a result, behavioural incidents are reducing in severity and frequency.

The recording of an incident involving self-injurious behaviour is not clear. It is difficult to ascertain what specific action was taken by staff or the decision-making linked to the child receiving medical attention. This is an isolated incident but an area for improvement.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

A committed manager understands the team's strengths. She has a clear vision for the future and how they can develop. Staff speak positively about the changes the manager has implemented and the support they receive. One staff member said, 'I feel we have strong direction, and [name of manager] takes on board what we say.'

Managers have a visible presence in the home. They have established positive relationships with the children. Managers clearly understand the children's needs and their progress. They ensure that staff promote the children's views and help them feel heard.

Staff benefit from regular practice-related supervision and team meetings. There is a focus on reflective practice. The manager challenges practice shortfalls but also praises strong and effective action by staff. Additionally, the manager uses advice from the in-house emotional support team to strengthen the staff's practice and their understanding of the children's needs.

Staff are up to date with the provider's mandatory training. The manager recognises the need for additional training to support staff in meeting children's specific needs. However, not all staff complete the relevant qualification within the required time frame. There is no evidence or rationale about the reason for the delay. However, staff are awaiting end-point assessments to finalise the qualification.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all staff in a care role, including external agency or bank staff, have attained the qualification in Regulation 32 (4) within the relevant time frame listed in Regulation 32 (5). ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.12)
- The registered person should ensure that staff have the relevant skills and knowledge to be able to respond to children's health needs. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 34, paragraph 7.12)

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: SC035235

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: Kimberley Ternent

Inspectors

Jess Elliott, Social Care Inspector

Karen Karlsson, Social Care Inspector

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