

SC035235

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 managed by a local authority. It provides care for up to three children who may have social and/or emotional difficulties and learning disabilities.

The manager registered with Ofsted in September 2022.

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

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 September 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 22 November 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/11/2021	Full	Good
26/11/2019	Full	Good
24/07/2018	Full	Good
06/06/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children have individualised and well-written care plans, which enables the staff to support them well. The care plans are child centred and thorough. This helps the children to make progress and have positive experiences while they are living in the home.

The home and the staff are described as warm and welcoming by the professionals who visit. Children's achievements are celebrated, and their photos and certificates are displayed where they wish, which is usually in their bedrooms. The staff maintain memory records for the children. These include photos of the children's prom celebrations, their first day back at school and their birthdays. This helps the children to have a sense of belonging and to build their self-esteem.

Children are supported to access education. The staff promote children's good attendance. When the children need extra support, this is provided by the staff, following effective communication with educational professionals. As a result, children feel valued and enjoy their education.

Children stay healthy as they receive consistently good care and support from the manager and the staff. The children are supported to maintain their emotional and physical health. For example, they take part in exercise in the community, such as dance classes, gym sessions and swimming. Children have been supported by staff to join different clubs, such as the Army Cadets, Girl Guides and football teams. Additionally, the staff promote healthy eating and help the children to learn skills around this. The looked after children's nurse is actively involved and said, 'They (staff) are extremely passionate about positive relationships and promoting a healthy lifestyle for the children. They make it fun.'

Children are consistently supported to have positive relationships with their family. The manager and the staff recognise the challenges that this brings for the children. Together, they work with the children and their families to develop positive working relationships. This supports the child's sense of belonging and identity.

Older children are supported to prepare for adult life, including good sexual health and parenthood. The manager and the staff are innovative and use creative approaches to help the children to understand information and real-life situations. In one example, a doll, which imitates a baby, was used to demonstrate the challenges of being a parent. This involved life skills, such as budgeting, shopping, menu planning and cooking, as well as organising babysitters (staff) when necessary. This empowers the children and gives them skills for their future.

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

Children are welcomed into the home following a careful risk assessment which ensures that all the children's needs are considered. A thorough and well-planned series of introductions for the children and the staff supports this process. This helps the children to settle in and feel valued and respected.

Staff are knowledgeable about the children's risks. The introduction of positive behaviour support plans, alongside thorough risk assessments, has helped the staff to really understand the children in their care. This has led to a significant reduction in the children going missing from the home, becoming emotionally distressed and being exposed to the risk of harm.

Staff are nurturing and calm in their approach. Through effective communication and observations by the staff and the management team, the sensory needs of the children are identified. The relevant referrals have been made to occupational therapists for a professional assessment. This proactive approach to the children's care provides the children with an increasingly safe place where they make progress.

Children are supported to develop their knowledge and understanding about situations that may pose a risk. Detailed and well-planned key-work sessions layer the children's learning so that they can continue to increase and reinforce their knowledge. Staff use opportunities to discuss relevant topics with the children. This, alongside e-learning, helps the children to understand the risks and learn how to keep themselves safe.

Children know how to make a complaint, and their views are listened to and acted on. The manager is accessible, and the staff understand their roles and responsibilities in keeping the children safe. Visitors to the home can be unsettling and difficult for the children. The manager and the staff respect the children's wishes. As a result, the children often meet professionals from their care team outside of the home. This has supported the children to feel safe and empowered in their home. Relevant professionals have noted a positive difference in the children's presentation and emotional well-being.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager is dedicated and purposeful in bringing about improvements to the quality of care that the children receive, and significant changes have been made. During this time of change, the manager has been highly active and available to the children and the staff team. The staff speak positively about the journey that they have been on with the manager. They describe the positive culture in the home, feeling valued and supported, and how there are benefits being seen in the progress that the children are making.

The manager and her leadership team provide the staff with regular and effective supervision. This is in addition to highly effective and purposeful monthly team

meetings, which are often attended by guest speakers to provide guidance and additional support. The provision and implementation of learning are embedded in the staff's practice and skills. The results are seen in the children's increased confidence, presentation and emotional well-being. This was expressed by several professionals in reference to the manager's positive influence and management oversight that she brings to the home.

The manager has a clear vision for the home, which is shared by the staff. Children's plans are reviewed and audited frequently. The cross-referencing of policies and procedures and protocols supports the staff's awareness and development. The attention and scrutiny of language used by staff ensures that the children's plans are sensitively and positively recorded. Children are involved in writing their plans and are supported and encouraged by the staff to read these. This helps the children to grow in confidence as they know their views and opinions are respected and they are valued.

The manager and the staff maintain excellent working relationships with partner agencies. This is reflected in comments made by professionals and is evident in their willingness to provide guidance and additional training to a developing staff team. The culture of learning is providing the children with skilled and empathic carers.

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: County Hall, Durham DH1 5UJ

Responsible individual: Laura Caunce

Registered manager: Lisa Ryder

Inspectors

Michael Dack, Social Care Inspector

Carol Jagger, Social Care Inspector

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