

SC035247

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This short break children's home is operated by a local authority. It is registered to provide care for up to seven children who have learning and/or physical disabilities. The home also provides care for children who may require accommodation on a longer term basis.

35 children are currently having short breaks in the home. Four children were spoken with or observed as part of the inspection.

The manager registered with Ofsted in March 2023.

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 October 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 3 February 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
03/02/2025	Full	Good
11/03/2024	Full	Good
21/02/2023	Full	Good
15/06/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children often access the service over long periods. They receive high-quality care by a skilled team of staff who are invested in their well-being. The manager and staff have an excellent knowledge of the children's needs and build strong connections with them. This helps children to make significant progress because of staying at the home.

Staff speak about the children in the warmest regard. The manager carefully considers the needs of each child, and which children can stay at the home together, so they get the most from their experience. When children come to stay at the home, staff welcome them warmly and give them the time they need to adjust to being at the home. This promotes a sense of belonging and supports children to develop positive and trusting relationships with those caring for them.

Staff provide children with a broad range of activities and opportunities. They are aspirational in helping children overcome barriers to enjoy any activities, including in the community. Children access activities that are in line with their interests, while also exploring new experiences to broaden their horizons. This supports children to make sustained progress in areas such as social communication and fine motor skills. One parent said, '[Name of Child] is getting out in the community more. I'm pleased that [Name of Child] is making friends and connecting with others.'

Children have access to excellent facilities in the home. Soft play and sensory rooms are well equipped and offer children opportunities for exploratory play. Some aspects of the home require refurbishment to make them more accessible for children. However, this has not negatively impacted children's experiences. The manager and senior leaders have been proactive in escalating improvements needed in the building.

Staff receive specific training in line with children's communication needs, for example Makaton and picture exchange. This has helped staff to advocate for children's views and wishes. In addition, the manager ensures that children have access to advocacy services when this is needed. Staff promote inclusivity in the home by educating children about different cultures.

Staff consistently strive to develop trusting and positive relationships with family members. Parents say they feel comfortable asking staff for advice. There is a drive from staff to replicate what is working well at the family's homes and at this home, to maintain consistency in both settings and sustain children's progress. Parents say the quality of care given to their children is 'amazing'. They describe their children being settled and that it is a second home for them.

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

Staff have an excellent understanding of the children's individual risks and vulnerabilities. The manager proactively identifies necessary training and involves health professionals to enhance the knowledge of staff. This means that staff are highly skilled at meeting children's complex health and care needs, for example where children have specific feeding or medication routines.

Staff are skilled at helping children to manage their feelings and responses to challenging circumstances. Clear behaviour support plans help staff to de-escalate situations. Staff work proactively with parents and professionals to understand and effectively address any triggers to unwanted behaviours. There have been no physical holds since the last inspection.

The manager has clear oversight of serious incidents. She ensures that debriefs take place with children in line with their needs. Where staff assess that children may not benefit from discussing incidents further, their views are recorded. The manager identifies anything that could be done differently and shares lessons learned with staff. This helps to decrease the likelihood of reoccurrences.

The manager promotes a strong safeguarding culture in the home. Staff take appropriate and proportionate steps to report any concerns they have to the right professionals. This helps to ensure that children remain safe and well cared for.

Some children who come to stay at the home have been given longer term residential care when concerns outside the home have impacted their living arrangements. The manager and staff are attuned to children's emotional needs and go above to offer reassurance. This enables those children to be cared for by familiar adults. This also helps to give children additional support and lessen the impact any difficulties have on them.

The manager has implemented changes to medication procedures. This has had a positive impact on staff understanding and practice. These improvements mean that children receive medication effectively and safely.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is managed by an inspirational and confident manager. She is enthusiastic about improving outcomes for children and is supported by an effective deputy and stable team of staff who share her vision. The manager gives clear direction to staff and is ambitious about what the team can achieve for children. There is a high level of accountability among staff, and the care given to children is consistently nurturing and compassionate.

The manager understands the strengths of the home. She has improved the way the home is run, and this is having a positive impact on staff and children. Staff strongly

praise the changes and can confidently relate these to the significant progress that children are making. One staff member said:

'Working here is not just a job, it's a privilege. Every day, I witness moments of progress, joy and connection that happen when children and young people feel truly safe, seen and supported. This home provides exactly that, a nurturing, stable environment where each child is valued as an individual, not just for who they are today, but for who they can become with the right support.'

There is a positive working culture, and morale is high among team members. Staff say they feel extremely well supported by the management team. The quality of regular supervision sessions has been improved and encourages staff to reflect on and develop the care they give to children. Records provide evidence of a significant improvement in the quality of practice-related supervision, and staff acknowledge that this has benefited their practice.

Team meetings occur regularly and give staff opportunities to discuss and shape the way the home is run. Team meeting minutes are thorough and capture the reflective discussions staff have about children's needs. The manager facilitates the team to explore different safeguarding scenarios so that staff are aware of the home's procedures. This helps staff be prepared to respond to any concerns they might encounter.

The manager has collaborative working relationships with external professionals. Strong communication between staff and professionals ensures that positives and safeguarding concerns are shared accordingly. Professionals recognise the difference that the manager and staff are making to the children's lives. Additionally, staff establish connections with navigation workers early to understand and support children as they transition into adulthood. They facilitate these workers getting to know the children during their visits to the home.

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: SC035247

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: Margaret Laidler

Inspectors

Mark Cryer, Social Care Inspector
Jess Elliott, Social Care Inspector (lead)

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