

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC037984
Inspector	Stella Henderson
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Darlington Borough Council
Registered person address	Town Hall Feethams DARLINGTON County Durham DL1 5QT
Responsible individual	Murray Rose
Registered manager	Toni Diana Mace
Date of last inspection	20/03/2014

Inspection date	10/12/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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This is an effective service where young people make good progress. Individualised planning, intervention and review is tailored to the diverse needs of young people. Safe practice is embedded in all aspects of home's operation. Parents and professionals say that young people are safe here.

Young people benefit from consistent staff and effective staff support. Staff are well supported and equipped to care competently for young people. Close and productive working relationships with professionals are an important component of this and provides for an effective 'team around the child' approach.

Management of the home is effective. Regular monitoring ensures young people are provided with the resources and support they need. The manager strives for continual improvement and provides staff with clear expectations.

The inspection identified three areas for improvement. One relates to notifications, the others to adapting procedures to comply with a change in the Children's Homes regulations. The impact on the welfare or safety of young people is negligible, but reflects a delay in responding to legislative changes.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home provides care and accommodation for three children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is operated by the local authority.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/03/2014	Interim	good progress
18/07/2013	Full	good
19/02/2013	Interim	good progress
09/05/2012	Full	good

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
30 (2001)	ensure that if, in relation to a children's home, any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place the registered person shall without delay notify the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table (Regulation 30)(1)	12/01/2015
33 (2001)	inspect the premises of the children's home and such of the children's homes records as the independent person requires (save for a child's case records, unless the child and the child's placing authority consent to the inspection of those records by the independent person)(Regulation 33)(8)(b)	12/01/2015
34	maintain a system for monitoring the matters set in	28/02/2015

(2001)	Schedule 6 at least once in every 3 months and improving the quality of care provided in the children's home. The system referred to in paragraph (1) shall provide for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities (Regulation 34)(1)(a)(b)(3)	
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Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people benefit from the good quality support provided by the home. As with all adolescents, their positive development is not always straightforward. Overall however, young people make steady progress from their starting points on admission to the home.

All young people are in full-time education or equivalent. Attendance can sometimes fluctuate but they achieve and sometimes exceed their predicted levels of attainment. Young people who are eligible to sit state examinations are expected to achieve at least the average grade in national qualifications.

Where young people have developed a particular aptitude, such as in photography, they invest in their education by engaging in regular work experience and additional part time work. This is providing a good basis on which to build a future career.

Effective health promotion ensures young people have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and how to achieve this. Young people enjoy good health with limited use of prescribed medication. One young person has stopped smoking.

Young people have good appetites and maintain a healthy weight. This is not because of participation in formal exercise, but in cycling and walking to get to school and visit friends and family. The home does not always have access to a car, and this is helpful in getting young people on the move. It also contributes to their developing independence skills. As emerging young adults, young people choose for themselves the kind of sporting and leisure activities they want to be involved in and in common with their peers dip in and out of these activities as they wish.

Young people's emotional health improves during their time at the home. Where necessary, young people can call on the additional support of child and adolescent mental health services to deal with more entrenched emotional issues.

Young people are, on the whole, successfully dealing with the emotional challenges of adolescence. This is evident in young people's ability to establish meaningful relationships with friends and people outside of the home, in maintaining good attendance at school and in generally being able to enjoy life.

Young people are helped to maintain contact with members of their families. Staff will assist with contact visits if required and parents say they are always welcome at the home. By maintaining links with people who are important to them, this places young people in a better position to access a support network when they leave care.

Quality of care

good

Young people benefit from individualised care and support which helps to improve their confidence, self-esteem and understanding of their personal history. Young people are valued as individuals and this promotes strong attachments, developing the foundations for young people to sustain appropriate relationships with other people, their peers and family.

Parents feel that their children are well looked after and that the staff 'cannot be faulted.' They comment positively on their children's appearance and say the staff keep them well-informed. Parents are confident that their children would say if they were unhappy with things at the home.

Young people's plans, incentives and targets are tailored to their needs. Young people are consulted on all aspects of their care and are actively engaged in planning for their future. Key worker sessions underpin the care planning process and offer young people the opportunity to discuss their achievements problems and learn from any temporary setbacks. This helps young people to move forward with their lives and make good progress.

The manager and staff have high but not unrealistic ambitions for young people. They consistently look for ways to extend and improve young people's experience and outcomes. This is assisted by effective partnership working with other agencies.

Young people respect and feel ownership of the environment they live in, which is comfortable, well-equipped and homely. The manager and staff ensure that good relationships are maintained with neighbours.

Keeping children and young people safe

good

Young people are safe at the home, and parents feel that their children are in a safe place. A social worker noted that, 'young people are looked after well and are kept safe.' Young people trust staff and as a result have felt confident to disclose historic concerns. These have been immediately referred to the appropriate authorities.

Although young people do not always comply with the boundaries set for them, over time they generally respond positively to the home's approach. Each young person's individual risks are clearly understood and staff demonstrate they have a well-informed professional understanding of presenting behaviours. This has led to a reduction in disciplinary measures.

Staff draw on theories and approaches to inform their practice, such as restorative justice. There is a 'zero tolerance' approach to bullying and any incidents are immediately addressed with the young people concerned.

On those occasions where young people place themselves at risk, they are protected by the actions of staff to safeguard them. 'Missing from home' incidents are infrequent, but where these occur staff follow appropriate procedures promptly to ensure young people's safe return. There is strong partnership working on this matter supplemented by informal visits to the home by the local community police officer. This conveys to young people that staff and others are genuinely concerned about their whereabouts.

Young people are also kept safe by robust recruitment procedures, the accurate recording and dispensing of medication and environmental health and safety checks.

Leadership and management

adequate

The Registered Manager has managed the home for over a year. She has considerable experience, a relevant degree and suitable management qualifications.

The manager has a keen oversight of the home's performance. She is aware of the areas for development for the home and consults regularly with young people, their parents and stakeholders. However this ample and wide-ranging evidence is not fully evaluated. This does not do justice to the good work undertaken by staff. It also limits the extent to which the home can drive forward further improvement. The current format used by the home does not comply with new regulations.

Additional scrutiny of the home is undertaken by an independent visitor. This is useful and helps the manager to identify areas of improvement. The requirement to gain social worker's and young people's consent to look at their case files has not been secured. This impacts on their right to confidentiality.

There are very few notifiable events at the home. In one situation however there was considerable delay in notifying the regulator about the incident. This did not impact on the safety and welfare of young people, but limits the regulator's ability to take prompt action in relation to any safeguarding matters, should it so wish.

Young people are looked after by staff who maintain a high level of competence by mandatory and specialised training. This is supplemented by regular supervision and team meetings. The manager is linked in to a number of forums and has taken part in Ofsted consultations. This helps to keep her knowledge base up to date.

Parents and professionals comment positively on communication with staff and good working relationships. Staff are experienced and have a wide repertoire of skills. They report that they are well-supported in their work. This assists them to fulfil the objects of the home, as outlined in the Statement of Purpose.

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.