

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC037984
Inspector	Nicholas Murphy
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Darlington Borough Council
Registered person address	Town Hall Feethams DARLINGTON County Durham DL1 5QT
Responsible individual	Jennifer Cooke
Registered manager	Toni Diana Mace
Date of last inspection	10/12/2014

Inspection date	24/03/2015
Previous inspection	good
Enforcement action since last inspection	there has been no enforcement action since the last inspection

This inspection

This home was judged good at the last full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has **declined in effectiveness**.

Since the last inspection, outcomes for young people have been variable. Some have made progress in some areas of their lives, but the overall trend is downwards. Young people have had varying degrees of engagement with their education placements, although very recently there has been more consistent attendance. Young people are in reasonable health, although some continue to engage in risk taking behaviours. For example, some use alcohol to excess. Staff have been persistent in arranging appointments with specialist services to address this issue, but young people have refused to cooperate. More positively, the number of occasions when young people have gone missing has reduced.

Young people's behaviour is of concern. Most of the time, relationships between staff and young people are generally good. One young person said, 'I like the staff and the home is awesome.' However, there have been a number of violent incidents where young people have verbally abused staff and physically assaulted them. At times, staff have had to call police to restore order and keep people safe. Some young people have faced criminal charges as a result of this behaviour. However, staff are aware of the potential impact of police involvement upon the life chances of young people. For example, some staff have chosen not to press criminal charges even after young people have assaulted them.

Several incidents of challenging behaviour have arisen when there has been only one member of staff on duty. The Registered Manager and provider have acted to put in place provisional arrangements to strengthen staffing levels, including during the night. A decision has not yet been reached about how to implement these changes on a permanent basis. It is important that the staffing of the home is sufficient to meet the needs of young people and keep them, and staff, safe.

Staff are enthusiastic in advocating for young people and celebrating their successes. They are committed to encouraging young people to have ambition and develop their potential. The home is developing an approach to behaviour management based on more positive strategies and rewarding young people's progress. Staff are good at consulting with young people and using key worker sessions to talk through issues. They listen to young people's views and give them weight. One young person has recently chosen a new set of storage units, and a different colour scheme, for his bedroom.

The Registered Manager has addressed all the statutory requirements made at the last inspection. Significant events are now notified to Ofsted promptly, enabling the regulatory body to apply timely oversight. The Registered Manager's monitoring complies with regulation and ensures that all required areas are evaluated. And, the person who makes monthly monitoring visits only examines individual case files if they have the consent of young people. This upholds young people's rights to confidentiality and privacy.

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
10/12/2014	Full	good
20/03/2014	Interim	good progress
18/07/2013	Full	good
19/02/2013	Interim	good progress

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
25 (2001)	ensure that there is at all times, having regard to the size of the children's home and needs and number of the children accommodated there; and the need to safeguard and promote the health and welfare of the children accommodated in the home, a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working at the children's home (Regulation 25(1)).	31/05/2015

What inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspections we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

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.