

SC037984

Registered provider: Darlington Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is owned and managed by the local authority. It provides care for up to three children who may experience social and emotional difficulties. Three children were living at the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in December 2022.

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 March 2024

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: 29 November 2022

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
29/11/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
22/08/2022	Full	Inadequate
01/03/2022	Full	Good
14/08/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are building trusted and secure relationships with staff. Staff take time to get to know children individually, and know their likes and dislikes. Staff know what support children need to make progress. Children like living at the home and they like the staff. Children at the home feel secure.

Children's views and wishes are listened to. Children talk to staff about what it is like to live at the home. Children are involved in the planning of menus and holidays and choose how to spend their free time and pocket money.

Children are encouraged to try new experiences, such as attending local clubs and kayaking. They enjoy go-karting, gaming, trips to the seaside and music lessons. These memories are captured in large, colourful scrap books for children to keep. This gives children positive memories to look back on.

Children benefit from consistency and boundaries which they understand. They talk enthusiastically about earning rewards, such as trips to the ice cream parlour. Positive behaviour is promoted and recognised. When there are consequences to unwanted behaviours, these are discussed with the children, are short in duration and effective. Staff create reflective bi-monthly newsletters. These are written directly to each child and celebrate their progress and achievements. This helps children to develop the ability to make good decisions for themselves.

Children are making progress with their education and staff support them with their attendance at school. Staff advocate for children when changes to their current education provision are needed. When children are unable to attend education, children complete schoolwork at home. Staff sit with children and support them with worksheets and booklets. Feedback from education professionals about the support staff give children is very positive. Staff are ambitious for children and want them to do well.

Children are supported to attend physical and mental health appointments and reviews. Staff at the home make every effort to ensure that the children in their care remain well and in good health. When children have complex health needs, staff ensure that the right people are involved in their care. Staff work closely with specialist health teams, therapists and charitable organisations to develop clear risk assessments and plans of care. This secures the best possible outcome for children.

Children are supported to develop the skills needed to help them become more independent. They have access to a wide range of information. Dedicated staff teach children skills, such as shopping, budgeting, domestic tasks and recognising their support networks. Transitions into and from the home are well planned. Children's transitions are individual and thoughtful, which means they are more likely to be successful.

Children know how to complain and are confident they would be listened to and action taken. The children's guide contains information for children about who they can complain to and is written in a format they can understand. The opinions of children at the home are valued.

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

Children at the home feel safe and talk to staff about what matters to them. Staff have a good understanding of the needs of the children, including how past experiences may have affected them. Up-to-date assessments are reviewed regularly and reflect the known individual risks to children. Staff confidently discuss risks with the children. This helps children to stay safe.

Staff are trained to physically intervene to protect children, if necessary, to keep people safe. Any physical interventions which take place are reviewed by the manager and discussed with the child and staff involved. Children have further opportunities to reflect on this with staff and talk about any concerns they may have. Children are beginning to develop the skills to manage their own emotions better.

Children who currently live at the home rarely go missing from the home. When children do go missing from the home, the plans in place are clear, detailed and direct staff to the appropriate course of action. Staff look for children and work with others, including the police, to make sure children return home safe. Staff talk with children when they return about why they went missing from the home. They identify what support can be offered to prevent them going missing in the future. This helps children to become increasingly safe.

The recruitment of staff is clear and organised. Checks and verification processes are completed before new staff start to work at the home. The induction process ensures that staff have a good understanding of how to care for children. The registered manager oversees this. Feedback from staff regarding the induction and the ongoing training which is completed is positive. Staff have the knowledge and skills to meet the individual needs of the children.

When staff identify that children could be at risk, a room search may be completed. This is to ensure that any items which may pose a risk to children are removed. When searches are carried out, a reason for this is recorded and this is discussed with the children. This helps children to understand that staff care about their welfare.

The local area risk assessment is reviewed each year by the registered manager and there is consultation with the relevant people. The home is homely, domestic and welcoming with the decoration and furnishings being in good order. The garden is well maintained and suitable for children. However, during the inspection a fire door was propped open and not all fire doors closed securely into the frame. In the event of a fire, this could pose a risk to children.

Children say they like their bedroom and they are decorated to their own taste with toys, books and gaming devices. However, children do not have keys to their own bedroom and cannot access them without the assistance of staff. The registered manager said she would make sure children had their own keys and would be able to access all appropriate areas of the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Feedback about the home from parents and professionals is positive. They describe staff who communicate well and have a good knowledge and understanding of the children. The manager ensures that staff attend external meetings for children. Regular progress updates, which are written by the staff, with help from children, are shared with social workers.

The manager is ambitious for the children living at the home. She ensures that any necessary support which children require is in place. The manager makes appropriate challenge to others, including external agencies, when they do not meet her high expectations for the children's care. She is knowledgeable about the needs of the children and speaks compassionately about children who live in the home and those who have moved on to independent living. The manager of the home is a respected role model.

The manager has appropriate oversight of the home. Incidents are well managed, and these are reviewed and responded to with changes made as necessary. She ensures that staff are aware of any updates to risk assessments and plans of care through her presence in the home, good communication and regular staff meetings. The manager makes sure staff know the risks posed to children and what helps them to flourish.

Staff speak very positively about the manager and the support offered by the team. Staff said they work well together and are supportive of each other. The manager is described as approachable. Staff said they are supported to be honest and open. Staff describe regular opportunities to discuss and explore what is happening for children and to reflect on and improve their care. Staff said they enjoy working at the home.

Regular reflective supervision sessions are completed with the staff. Staff say they feel supported by the manager. Training needs are revisited in supervision sessions and appraisals. This includes reviewing that staff have completed their mandatory training and continual professional development. This ensures staff can meet the individual needs of the children.

The manager completes regular audits to ensure that quality is maintained. There are monthly visits to the home by an independent person. The manager has also developed other ways for obtaining feedback via regular surveys. These are sent to parents and professionals and are reviewed and responded to. A six-monthly report of progress is shared with the regulator. This includes feedback from staff and

professionals but does not include the views and opinions of children. This is a missed opportunity to use children's views to drive up the quality of care provided.

An up-to-date statement of purpose is in place. It describes the care offered in the home and the skills and experience of staff. However, this had not been shared with the regulator as required.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015, and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'. The registered person must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
If the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 applies to the home— the registered person must ensure that the requirements of that Order and any regulations made under it, except for article 23 (duties of employees), are complied with in respect of the home. (Regulation 25 (2)(b)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that fire doors are not propped open and that they are able to close securely in the door frame as a fire precaution.	10 May 2024
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements to the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1) (2)(h)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that the statement of purpose is submitted to Ofsted within 28 days of it being updated. Additionally, the registered person is to ensure that Regulation 45 reports, the review of the quality of care, include the views and opinions of children.	10 May 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that, just as in a family home, children can access all shared areas of their home unless there are specific reasons why this would not meet a child's needs. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10)

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: SC037984

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Darlington Borough Council

Registered provider address: Town Hall, Feethams, Darlington DL1 5QT

Responsible individual: Christopher Bell

Registered manager: Sharon Davison

Inspectors

Jo Cansfield, Social Care Inspector

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