

SC064931

Registered provider: Pear Tree Projects Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home accommodates up to eight children or young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and/or learning disabilities. It is provided by a private organisation.

Inspection dates: 13 to 14 September 2017

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 **good**

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

Date of last inspection: 17 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- The staff team is experienced and stable. It provides continuity of care and consistency of approach.
- Attendance at education is high for all the children and young people.
- The management team has improved monitoring processes. This has resulted in

improvements in recording.

- The children and young people are progressing and achieving, and they are fit and healthy. They are consulted with about important decisions in their lives, and their views are taken into account.
- Transitions for the children and young people moving into the home are very well planned, and they are supported to develop good independence skills that prepare them for adulthood.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The home is in need of some redecoration and replacement of furnishings.
- Challenging behaviour needs to be addressed by a more restorative approach, rather than sanctions.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
21/09/2016	Full	Good
30/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
04/01/2016	Full	Good

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

Recommendations

- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. Children's homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene etc.); however in doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- Regulation 19(2) details sanctions that are prohibited in behaviour management. Any sanctions used to address poor behaviour should be restorative in nature, to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the staff caring for them and the wider community. In some cases it will be important for children to make reparation in some form to anyone hurt by their behaviour and the staff in the home should be skilled to support the child to understand this and carry it out. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.38)
- The registered person should oversee the welfare of the children in their care through observation and engagement with: each child; the home's staff; each child's family/carers where appropriate; and professionals involved in the care or protection of each child including their social worker, independent reviewing officer (IRO) teachers, clinicians and other health professionals. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.23)
- Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The children and young people receive good quality, individualised care that meets their needs. They are supported and nurtured by a stable, experienced staff team which is aspirational on their behalf. A social worker said: 'They have done really well with [Name]. He is starting to settle and reflect on his behaviour. He is well thought of by the staff and they talk about him warmly.'

The children and young people are, overall, a new group. Transitions to and from the

home are well planned. All available information is analysed and evaluated to ensure that the group will, as far as possible, settle and get along. The manager and the staff team dedicate a large amount of time and discussion to this pre-admission phase. This enables the children and young people to settle quickly. Key workers have a pivotal role during each transition period, by offering the children and young people one-to-one, individualised time and support. This direct, focused approach produces good outcomes for the children and young people

The same care and dedication to planning is in place for the young people who move on from the home. Such planning begins early with a plan for independence that deals with day-to-day tasks such as cooking and laundry, and moves on to large topics such as job hunting and gaining your own tenancy. Most young people remain in contact with one or more members of the staff team, and update them regularly about their lives for a significant length of time.

All the children and young people are progressing and achieving. They are happy living at the home, and they have formed bonds with the staff and developed friendships with each other. This gives them emotional security and a feeling of belonging. The children and young people could identify an adult in the home whom they felt close to, and with whom they could share their concerns or worries.

Activities are a strength, and there is a strong focus on giving the children and young people choices about how they spend their leisure time. Often, activities are managed as a group, but individual children and young people can pursue their own choices day to day. This engagement in activities continues at the school, which is owned by the home's organisation. The majority of the children and young people attend this school, and have 100% attendance. This excellent rate of attendance is also shared by one child who attends a mainstream school some distance away, for which transport is provided by the staff team. This commitment to education is further demonstrated by the staff team attending the school each day to ensure consistency in managing and addressing behaviour. A parent said: 'I am very proud of his achievements since he joined the home.'

The children and young people are supported to express their wishes and feelings on a regular basis. The introduction of a child-friendly care plan has enabled them to share views on their care, and have their feelings responded to. Regular group meetings help the children and young people express their wider views and have input into the home. Minutes of these meetings demonstrate that issues are freely raised and answered. Complaints raised by the children and young people are dealt with in a speedy manner, and responses to the outcomes are recorded.

The home is a large house with adequate space for both individual and group activities. The addition of a games room has been welcomed by the children and young people, who use it regularly with support. Overall, the decoration and furnishings are of a good standard. However, some rooms require replacement of items and redecoration.

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

Comprehensive risk assessments identify the children's and young people's individual vulnerabilities. The staff team has a good knowledge of each child and young person's needs, and the risks they pose to themselves and others. Staffing levels are very good, which ensures that there is safe observation and supervision. No children or young people are at risk of exploitation or radicalisation. An incident with a young person who has now moved on from the home indicated an interest in extremist views. The manager acted quickly and notified the relevant authorities. The incident was thoroughly investigated and identified as curiosity.

There is no strong evidence of bullying, although the relationships between the children and young people are sometimes fractious. The children and young people rarely go missing, but when they do there are good protocols in place to respond quickly and effectively. Risks are managed appropriately. This enhances the sense that children and young people have of being safe. A young person stated that he feels 'well supported and safe'.

As a result of the good relationships with the staff, episodes of challenging behaviour are appropriately dealt with at an early stage. However, there are occasions when physical intervention is necessary to prevent injury to other children, young people and staff. The incidence of physical intervention did increase for a period of time when the group of children and young people were first together. Overall, such interventions were guiding the children and young people away from situations, rather than full restraint. All of the staff team is appropriately trained in de-escalation and physical intervention, and now that the group has settled such interventions have decreased, and there have been none for over a month.

Sanctions are used to manage challenging behaviour. However, the use of sanctions is high and, on occasions, punitive. A restorative approach should be adopted to help the children and young people to learn from their behaviour, and how it affects those around them.

All visitors to the home are checked and vetted, and they sign the visitor's book so that the registered manager can monitor who comes into the home, and the purpose of their visit. These measures ensure that the children and young people are protected from unsuitable adults.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is appropriately qualified. He is supported by an experienced and motivated senior management team. The manager is very much involved in the care and support of the children and young people. He is a very good advocate, and he does not hesitate to challenge services to ensure that the children's and young people's rights are respected. He has high aspirations and a strong vision to improve the children's and young people's outcomes and quality of life. A social worker said: 'This is by far the best home I have dealt with. They report issues well and keep me up to date. The manager is very good and they always come prepared to meetings.'

The manager has a very good understanding of the home's strengths and weaknesses,

and he is taking action to improve the home's efficiency and shortfalls in practice. He regularly monitors the home's performance and the outcomes for the children and young people. He has improved the levels of recording within files and risk assessments. However, records show that some members of staff continue to record using judgemental language, and a further recommendation has been included to address this. The manager has produced an effective, helpful locality risk assessment, taking into account the views of other professionals, which assists in ensuring the safety of children and young people in the community.

All staff hold the requisite level 3 qualification, apart from those who have recently joined the team, who remain within the timescales for qualification. The training matrix is up to date, and the staff team has recently benefited from a bespoke course addressing one of the primary needs of the children and young people. A member of staff said: 'It was good to see the manager in a different light and I got a lot of benefit from being able to discuss things with colleagues face to face rather than do the training online.'

Supervision is regular and offers opportunities for the staff team to reflect as individuals and as a group. Safeguarding and the needs of the children and young people are the focus of the monthly sessions. Such opportunities are further improved by monthly, effective, staff meetings. A member of staff said: 'All the seniors are helpful and supportive, they are easy to approach and talk to. I feel part of the team, supported and valued.'

The home's statement of purpose details the care to be provided to the children and young people. It outlines where this home fits within the organisation, and in relation to the school. The seamless service offers a unique perspective from which to make a difference to the lives of children and young people.

All of the requirements and recommendations of the last inspection are met.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC064931

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Pear Tree Projects Limited

Registered provider address: Peartree House, Bolam, Darlington, County Durham
DL2 2UP

Responsible individual: David Bartlett

Registered manager: Michael Crisp

Inspector:

Susan Atkinson-Millmoor, social care inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

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