

SC064931

Registered provider: Pear Tree Projects Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a private company. It provides care for up to eight children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

There were eight children living at the home at the time of the inspection. The inspectors spoke with seven of the children.

The manager registered with Ofsted in November 2018.

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 October 2025

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: 4 December 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/12/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
12/03/2024	Full	Good
15/03/2023	Full	Outstanding
01/03/2022	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children benefit from living in a stable and nurturing home environment. They receive consistent care from staff who know them well and provide structure and routine. This helps children to feel settled and make good progress across all aspects of their lives. Children speak positively about living at the home, describing it as 'great' and rating it highly. One child said, 'They have changed my life.'

The home provides a warm, welcoming and child-friendly environment. It has recently undergone significant redecoration and children's photos and belongings are displayed throughout, reflecting their personalities and sense of belonging. Bedrooms are highly individualised, and the home is clean, tidy and homely.

Children develop positive and trusting relationships with staff. These relationships help children to express their emotions more openly and to communicate how they feel. Staff know children well and understand their individual needs. They encourage children to develop friendships in the local community and support children to re-build relationships with family members. Staff travel long distances with children to enable them to spend time with their families and friends.

Children's educational progress is good. Staff maintain effective communication with schools and colleges and support learning both in and outside the home. Staff also support one child to engage in voluntary work, helping them to build confidence, life skills and independence.

Children are encouraged to develop their independence. They learn essential life skills, such as cooking, budgeting and managing money. Older children preparing to leave are supported to set up tenancies and manage online banking. Many children maintain contact with staff after moving on, reflecting the strong attachments formed.

Children enjoy a wide range of enriching activities, including cadets, performing arts and music lessons. One organisational policy relating to children's participation in contact sports such as boxing and martial arts was found to be restrictive, disallowing children from participating in these sports. The policy states that a child's continued wish to engage in such activities could lead to a review of placement suitability. This restricts children from expressing freedom of choice and may result in some children moving on unnecessarily.

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

Children are helped to understand and manage risk. Staff educate them about online safety, healthy relationships and sexual health. This proactive approach has led to safer online behaviour and improved understanding of appropriate boundaries. Children trust staff and are confident to seek help when they experience difficulties.

Staff use restorative approaches to manage children's behaviour. The frequency of consequences has reduced and, when used, these are proportionate and reflective. Staff help children to understand how their actions affect themselves and others, reinforcing positive behaviours and social responsibility. Praise and celebration of achievements are part of daily practice.

Children know how to make a complaint and are confident in doing so. When complaints are made, they are managed fairly and transparently, with detailed explanations given to help children understand outcomes. Children also have access to independent advocacy, and one child currently benefits from support to assist with their transition to adulthood.

Children's health needs are prioritised. Staff ensure that children attend health appointments. Children are supported to make informed decisions about their health, such as changes to medication, in consultation with professionals.

There have been two allegations made by children since the previous inspection. The most recent was handled swiftly and appropriately, with clear accountability and feedback to children. However, one earlier allegation was not managed in full accordance with the organisation's policy, as the investigation was not undertaken by someone independent of the home. This shortfall did not compromise children's safety.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is managed by an experienced and committed registered manager who provides strong and reflective leadership. She is well supported by her deputy and has a visible presence in the home. The registered manager knows each child well and monitors their progress closely. She takes proactive steps to adapt approaches to strengthen outcomes for children.

Staff describe the registered manager as 'supportive' and 'approachable', with one saying, 'She always has my back.' Supervision sessions are reflective, meaningful and focused on children's progress. Staff say that they benefit from a more consistent and experienced staff team and morale is high. Staff say that recent changes, including introducing shift leads and allowing children to have their mobile phones, have improved the quality of care and stability within the home.

The registered manager promotes a culture of learning and improvement. She stays up to date with current research and shares learning that may improve practice with other managers, such as how to implement language that cares. Records have improved and are now more child focused and less stigmatising, reflecting a respectful and strengths-based approach.

The registered manager works effectively with external professionals and advocates strongly for children, particularly when care plans do not align with children's wishes or

best interests. She shares intelligence with agencies to support children's welfare, including after they move on from the home.

Children were rewarded for their significant fundraising efforts by a local radio station, which offered them the unique opportunity to visit the station and receive an award. Leaders did not consult with children's social workers to obtain consent for children to participate and, as a result, children were prevented from participating.

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
The enjoyment and achievement standard is that children take part in and benefit from a variety of activities that meet their needs and develop and reflect their creative, cultural, intellectual, physical and social interests and skills. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff help each child to— develop the child's interests and hobbies; participate in activities that the child enjoys and which meet and expand the child's interests and preferences; and that each child has access to a range of activities that enable the child to pursue the child's interests and hobbies. (Regulation 9 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(b))	1 December 2025
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5(a))	1 December 2025

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that all staff, including managers and leaders, consistently follow the home's policies and procedures for the benefit of the children in the home's care. Everyone working at the home must understand their roles and responsibilities. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards, page 54, paragraph 10.20)

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: 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: Diana Hewick-Crawford

Inspectors

Julia Hagan, Social Care Inspector
Laura Roberts, Social Care Inspector

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