

SC068000

Registered provider: Darlington Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a local authority. It provides care for up to three children who experience social and/or emotional difficulties. Three children were living in the home at the time of the inspection.

The manager registered with Ofsted on 28 March 2021 and is appropriately qualified for this role.

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 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: 12 May 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
12/05/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
24/11/2021	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
23/06/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
16/12/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children benefit from trusting relationships with staff who know and understand them well. Staff support children to communicate effectively across different language barriers to enable each child to be involved effectively in their own care.

Children attend education and are making progress from their starting points. School attendance for all the children has improved. In relation to one child, the headteacher said, 'Attendance has not been great, it is increasing and [name of child] is making progress. This is a testament to the staff.' If a child refuses to attend school, staff maintain routines and encourage children to understand the importance of education and learning. The registered manager will request learning materials from the school, and staff will provide learning opportunities in the home.

Children know how to make complaints or raise issues about their care. Complaints are investigated by the registered manager. This process involves consultation with the child. Children have confidence that their complaints will be addressed and their views listened to. This ensures that children trust that their complaints are taken seriously.

Children are supported to attend health appointments and understand how important it is to stay healthy. Children who have lifelong health conditions are supported by staff to manage these positively. Staff have received specialist training to be knowledgeable and skilled in supporting the child, and they have developed positive links with specialist professionals. If medication or appointments are refused, staff work with the child to explore the barriers and support them in understanding the importance of attending appointments and taking their medication.

Children make memories and benefit from positive opportunities. They have access to a wide range of activities to support their hobbies and interests. Staff are creative in capturing these memories, which means that children have a record of their experiences to reflect on in the future.

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

Staff help children to maintain important relationships. They support children to spend time with family members and the people who are important to them in a safe way which helps maintain relationships. Staff build up communication with family members and develop trusting relationships, which prevents children from being isolated from their families. One parent said that staff do a 'grand job'.

Children say they are safe. Staff follow plans to support children in staying safe. One child goes missing from home regularly. The missing-from-home plan is clear and provides guidance for staff to follow, which is done consistently. However, missing-

from-home information is recorded in up to four documents and records are misleading in parts. This means that records lack clarity.

Staff are skilled at de-escalating behaviours. They use distraction and redirection to help children manage their frustrations. This means that physical interventions are kept to a minimum. All incidents are recorded in detail, including context and actions taken before a physical intervention is needed. Debriefs are carried out by the registered manager or senior residential care worker with children and staff to explore and learn from the incident.

Any incidents of bullying are challenged. Staff work with the children to help them understand healthy relationships and respect and to consider empathy and how what they may perceive as harmless comments could have an emotional impact on someone else. Bullying has reduced and records are written to the child in a way which promotes their understanding if they come back to read them in the future.

Risk assessments are robust and consider impact. They provide clear guidance to staff on what to do to reduce the risk of harm for each child. However, the risk status is not regularly reviewed or updated to ensure that it is current. Therefore, the high risks identified are not reflective of the current risks for each child and may not be effective in ensuring safety.

Children are provided with positive praise. Any achievements are recognised, and staff record how they have been celebrated. This strengths-based approach reinforces each child's achievements. Incidents which result in a consequence are limited. However, records reflect disciplinary measures in most incidents resulting in financial consequences. There is a lack of a restorative approach to help children understand the impact of their behaviour.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is qualified and supported by a senior residential childcare worker. The registered manager is aspirational for the children, which is reflected across the staff team. The staff are trained, knowledgeable and have the skills needed to ensure that children's needs are met. All training is up to date.

Safer recruitment checks are robust, which ensures that the staff team is safe to provide care for the children. Casual staff are subject to the same safer recruitment checks as permanent members of staff. The use of agency staff is minimal. However, robust checks are also carried out on any agency staff member, so the registered manager is assured that any adult in the home is safe to provide care.

The registered manager is knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of the home. There are monitoring systems in place to track progress and ensure quality and effectiveness in the care provided. This supports the registered manager in identifying areas for development.

Staff benefit from a comprehensive training package. They receive mandatory training as part of their induction. Additionally, specific courses relating to any identified needs of the children are made available, so staff are skilled at meeting specific needs. If training is not available, the registered manager will request and source what is needed to ensure that the staff are knowledgeable and can provide high-quality care to the children.

All staff receive regular supervision. Supervision is child focused and supports staff to discuss each child. Staff are given the opportunity to contribute to their care, track their progress and explore any barriers to the care they can provide. However, supervision records do not promote reflection to provide an opportunity to learn from incidents which have happened.

The registered manager carries out an annual locality risk assessment. The current assessment does not consider all local risks which could cause harm to a child. This means that staff have no guidance on how to manage the potential risks that are not identified. Therefore, staff cannot work effectively with the children to reduce the risk.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) 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 leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h)) In particular, ensure that each child's risk assessment and the risk status are reviewed and that staff understand any changes implemented.	24 July 2024
The registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children's home. (Regulation 46 (1)) In particular, ensure that all local risks are considered in the risk assessment.	24 April 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that records are kept detailing all individual incidents when children go missing from the home. Evaluation of missing-from-care incidents should be undertaken to identify any gaps in training, skills or knowledge for staff or to record and retain evidence of what worked well. ('Guide to Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality care standards', page 46, paragraph 9.31)
- The registered person should ensure that any consequences used to address behaviour are restorative, to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the staff caring for them and the wider community.

('Guide to Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality care standards', page 46, paragraph 9.38)

- The registered person should have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. ('Guide to Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality care standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)

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: SC068000

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Provider details: Darlington Borough Council

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

Responsible individual: Christopher Bell

Registered manager: Lisa Porritt

Inspector

Kate Jackson, Social Care Inspector

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