

SC444289

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 4 children who may experience social and emotional difficulties and who may have a learning disability.

At the time of the inspection, 4 children were living in the home. The inspector spoke with all the children.

The manager registered with Ofsted in July 2012.

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 February 2026

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 10 July 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/07/2024	Full	Good
15/11/2023	Full	Good
21/02/2023	Full	Good
05/01/2022	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children thrive in this friendly and nurturing home because they are cared for by a consistent and dedicated staff team who are highly invested in their futures. Staff have high aspirations for children and help them to identify their individual areas of strength and skill. They use this as the foundation to build children's self-esteem and emotional resilience. This helps children to develop positive, trusting and meaningful relationships with staff.

The home is located on a working farm with vast amounts of land, a lake and livestock. Children truly benefit from living on a working farm where they can, if desired, learn responsibilities for taking care of the animals. Opportunities to develop riding skills, equestrian care and dog walking are all part of life on the farm. The children embrace these opportunities and enjoy taking responsibilities that teach them important skills.

The home environment is warm and inviting. The manager uses the research he has done about the impact that colour schemes can have on an individual's mood and wellbeing when designing the interior furnishings and decoration of the home. This considered approach to the home's décor helps children to settle and relax in their home.

Children said that they like living in the home with one child saying, 'It's like a big family.' Children look forward to receiving their photograph memory books where their achievements and experiences are proudly displayed. These books are part of the children's life story work. Similarly, there is an abundance of photographs of children and staff displayed around the home.

Children's school attendance and their attainment levels significantly improve from their starting points. Children now attend the on-site school full time. In addition, children have a personal tutor to support their studies in core subjects such as English and Maths. This helps children to close gaps in their knowledge that have occurred because of previously low attendance.

Staff make considerable effort to help children discover their own identity. One way the staff support this is through exploring hobbies, clubs and activities. Children are encouraged to try new activities in line with their interests. For example, rugby, singing lessons, drama and dance are all activities the children enjoy. These activities also provide children with opportunities to meet new friends. Children are excelling in their chosen hobbies. One child who enjoys performing arts was invited to perform in a West End show. The manager arranged for the other children, staff, and family members to travel to see the show and experience the capital city with a weekend mini break. The child said, 'I just loved every minute of it. I was so proud of myself.'

Once children settle into their new home, they quickly begin to develop an understanding about their own value and self-worth. Children learn to have ambition for their futures and with the support of staff, they go on to achieve their goals.

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

Staff help children to develop the skills to take responsibility for their actions and develop empathy and understanding for others. It is embedded in every action and reaction from staff. Staff are highly skilled in managing children's behaviour. They teach children how to manage and understand their emotions and feelings safely.

Risks to children reduce because staff are attuned to children's needs and vulnerabilities. Children learn about risks in the community and online through meaningful and appropriate individual conversations and group workshops. They are encouraged to take age-appropriate risks, for example travelling to neighbouring cities to meet their friends and for younger children going to the local village alone. Children respond well to this and increasingly make safe choices.

Children say that they feel safe and confident to speak to staff about their worries or concerns, and that staff respond with empathy and care. Staff are highly skilled at addressing sensitive or difficult subjects with children in a therapeutic, trauma informed manner. When necessary, staff seek the support of specialist agencies to provide children with the correct care that they require. This ensures that children's needs are met and they are kept safe from harm.

Occasionally restrictions such as door alarms are needed to help keep children safe. Staff sensitively explain to children the reasons why these are necessary. The registered manager and staff monitor the effectiveness of this measure, and this ensures that it is used proportionally and effectively.

On some occasions, staff guide children away from danger or restrain children to keep them safe from harm. Trained staff implement these holds with empathy, care and sensitivity towards the child's feelings, while ensuring that their dignity is maintained. Children and staff are supported to reflect after any such incident. They consider changes in care or routine to avoid future incidents.

Recruitment practice in the organisation is not yet fully effective. This is because the provider's recruitment system only requires the month and year of previous employments. As a result, the manager is unable to identify all gaps in employment. However, there has been no direct impact on children living in the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is an inspiring leader who is invested in the welfare, safety and progress of children. His research and innovation have led to significant and positive change for children since the last inspection. He is a strong advocate for children and confidently challenges others when their decisions are not in children's best interests.

The registered manager has excellent oversight of the home. He has introduced new monitoring and recording systems that enable him to track children's progress and learn from serious incidents. This helps him to quickly identify patterns and trends or changes in children's behaviour. He takes quick and effective action when needed to ensure that children's needs are met. This helps children to make continuous progress towards their goals and aspirations.

Staff feel well supported by the registered manager and his capable deputy. They receive regular supervision sessions that focus on the needs of children and their wellbeing. The registered manager has a strong understanding of the staff's individual areas of strength and their areas for development. He has high expectations of his team while also creating a supportive environment where staff can reflect and learn individually and as a team.

The registered manager understands the value of children and their families having positive time together. He works collaboratively with family members to help them to understand their child's needs, while staff model positive parenting skills. Parents say that they feel supported by the manager and staff. Equally, the registered manager is a strong advocate for the children, who at times have different views to their parents. He carefully and sensitively manages these differences to ensure that the child's voice is heard, and that family members understand the importance of the child's views. When necessary, the registered manager ensures that an independent advocate is available to support the children.

Regular staff meetings take place, which are well attended. The registered manager uses these meetings to share his research into children's known or emerging needs. For example, they share research-based practice in areas such as self-harm. This helps staff to better understand the children's needs. The staff use this knowledge to shape the children's care and support plans and also measure the impact of this for children.

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

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that they have recruitment systems in place to identify and explore any gaps in staff's employment history to safeguard children and minimises potential risks to them. (Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 61, paragraph 13.1)

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: SC444289

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: Gary Ramsbottom

Inspector

Beth Forster, Social Care Inspector

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