

SC444289

Registered provider: Pear Tree Projects Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a private organisation. It provides care for up to four children who may have social or emotional difficulties, learning difficulties or mental disorders.

The manager is suitably qualified. He registered with Ofsted in 2012.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 January 2022

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

Date of last inspection: 21 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/01/2020	Full	Outstanding
05/02/2019	Full	Outstanding
30/01/2018	Full	Outstanding
08/02/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children's experiences of living at the home are positive, and children enjoy the farm location of this setting. They share new experiences with staff, including learning to fish and horse riding. Staff are positive role models for the children and provide them with nurturing care. This allows the children to form positive attachments and trusting relationships with the staff who provide their care and support.

Children attend and make good progress in education. When children struggle, meetings between the education provider, children's social workers and the staff are held to discuss the child's plans. This transparent communication ensures that children's plans are adapted when needed. This means that children receive an individualised timetable that reflects their learning and support needs.

Staff carry out one-to-one sessions with the children. These are child-centred, creative and of good quality. They provide children with a wide range of options to help them to learn to manage their emotions, anxieties and frustrations. For one child, the one-to-one sessions have helped them to cope better when they are angry, upset or sad. One therapist said, 'There has been lots of progress since I started work with [child's name], and that's not because of the work I've done; it's the work staff have done that's made the difference.' As a result, the child can now understand their feelings and emotions and how to respond to these.

Children are supported to attend their routine appointments. Nevertheless, one child does not wear their prescription glasses. Staff do not carry out direct work with the child around the importance of wearing their glasses and what further health implications could arise. When there are concerns with a child's mental health, staff refer children to the appropriate services. This means that children receive the support that they need when they are struggling to cope.

Staff promote children's independence by helping them to clean their bedrooms and do their washing on a weekly basis. Through one-to-one sessions with staff, one child is now able to travel independently on public transport. This provides the child with a skill that they can use throughout their life.

The registered manager and staff build strong relationships with the children's families. The space around the farmland allows family members to see the children at the home. This allows the children to spend time with the ones that mean the most to them in an environment where they feel safe, and for their families to see where they live. One parent said, 'The attitude from staff is lovely, they make me feel welcome; it's the only time I've felt this is the right placement for [child's name].'

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

Children's risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated by staff, with oversight from the registered manager. These documents provide staff with clear actions to follow in the event of threats to children's safety. Staff spoken to at the inspection are aware of the children's risks and know what strategies to use to manage these. This reduces the risk of harm to children.

Some children are physically abusive to each other. Staff do challenge the children appropriately and carry out key work around positive relationships. These incidents are becoming less frequent as the children are maturing and learning to cope better with group living. As a result, the use of physical restraint continues to reduce.

Children rarely go missing from the home. This is because they feel safe in the home and have positive relationships with staff. There has been one recorded occasion when a child has been missing from the home since the last inspection. Missing-from-home incidents receive a multi-agency response, and following any incidents, children receive an independent 'return home' visit. This reinforces a safety message to the child.

Sanctions are not recorded clearly and some records are confusing. This does not provide children with a clear or accurate picture of their time at the home or the progress that they have made.

Internet safety is a concern for some children in the home. Staff and relevant agencies work closely with children to help them to understand the importance of keeping safe online. Although the children are aware of how to keep safe online, further work is needed to develop some children's knowledge as they continue to be at risk of harm.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The experienced registered manager is supported by a dedicated staff team. Parents and other professionals speak highly of the manager and the staff about their work with the children. One independent reviewing officer said, 'Since [child's name] moved there, it has been the making of them; staff understand the child's individual needs and work closely with the social worker.' The registered manager and staff create a culture where there are high aspirations for the children to succeed in life.

The registered manager leads by example and is a positive role model for the staff. This means that the children receive consistent care which encourages routine and structure. The registered manager is meticulous in monitoring the outcomes of the children's progress. There are a number of systems in place that demonstrate that the children are making progress. Care-planning documents are up to date and include hyperlinks for staff to use should they want to refresh their memory on the research associated with the models of care.

Allegations are taken seriously and there is a multi-agency working approach to managing these. The registered manager takes all necessary action. This ensures that all professionals are aware and all relevant information is shared to protect children from harm.

The registered manager's internal monitoring of the home is effective. These systems enable the manager to assess and evaluate children's progress and, when necessary, amend practice in the home to meet their changing needs. Health and safety monitoring checks are also carried out routinely. This ensures that the children are living in a safe environment. Nevertheless, there are shortfalls in the external monitoring of the home. The independent visitor's reports are unclear in parts and do not include effective evaluation to determine if the children are effectively safeguarded at the home.

Staff receive good support and encouragement from the registered manager and benefit from regular and reflective supervision. The registered manager promotes research-based practice during team meetings and supervision. This helps staff to develop their knowledge and ensure that they learn new skills to deliver a high standard of care.

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, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The health and well-being standard is that— children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being. (Regulation 10 (1)(b))	5 February 2022
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to understand how to keep safe. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(ii)) In particular, ensure that staff continually help children to improve their understanding of online safety.	5 February 2022
When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person— if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires. The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether— children are effectively safeguarded. (Regulation 44 (2)(a) (4)(a)) In particular, ensure that the independent person's reports make clear if people spoken to are parents, carers or other professionals and that the independent person's opinion on whether children are effectively safeguarded is clear.	5 February 2022

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that information about the child is 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)

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

Gemma McDonnell, Social Care Inspector

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