

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC444289
Inspector	Michele Hargan
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Pear Tree Projects Limited
Registered person address	Toy Top Farm Houghton Bank, Heighington Darlington County Durham DL2 2UQ
Responsible individual	David Anthony John Bartlett
Registered manager	Gary Ramsbottom
Date of last inspection	20/01/2014

Inspection date	17/10/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	N/A

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	outstanding
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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Overall effectiveness is judged to be good.

Children are safe and staff are good at keeping them safe. Children learn that the support staff provide keeps them safe. Staff oversee children's use of the internet. A member of staff said, 'We supervise children, they are only little and we have net nannies.' Staff are available to help children and interested in what they are doing. Children learn that the adults caring for them are responsible for keeping them safe at all times. There are two recommendations for further improvement within this area.

Staff provide an outstanding quality of care to children. Children receive very good support from staff who enable a rural lifestyle for children, and activities that builds their confidence and self-esteem. Children's views influence the care they receive and the running of the home. Staff ask children about day to day matters, like menu planning and what activities they would like to take part in. They are also encouraged to express their feelings about changes and events, such as when other children leave or arrive at the home. This approach empowers children and helps them understand more about the choices available to them. There is one recommendation within this area.

Outcomes are judged good. Children learn that staff recognise their achievements just as readily as the times when they need support. A member of staff said about being a key worker, 'We have time to talk about things, we go out, we talk about how he is doing.' Children develop trust and an appropriate reliance on the adults responsible for them. This builds their emotional resilience.

Leadership and management of the children's home are judged good. Staff stability is good there has been no turnover of staff following the previous inspection. The Registered Manager ensures children's needs are central considerations in all aspects of running the home. There is one requirement and one recommendation made within this area.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home accommodates up to four children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is operated by a private company.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/01/2014	Interim	good progress
13/08/2013	Full	good
19/12/2012	Full	good

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
9 (2001)	ensure the registered manager shall undertake from time to time such training as is appropriate to ensure that he has the experience and skills necessary for managing the children's home. In particular the completion of training in attachment and relevant training in managing behaviour which may pose a risk of significant harm to other children. (Regulation 9 (3))	30/06/2015

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure sanctions and rewards for behaviour are clear, reasonable and fair and are understood by all staff and children. In particular make clear the effectiveness of any measure used (NMS 3.8)
- ensure use of restraint is set out in the home's behaviour management policy and is in line with any relevant government guidance on restraint techniques and approved approaches to the application of physical intervention and restraint. In particular ensure that any additional guidance or training provided to staff is not based on therapeutic approaches which staff are not suitably qualified to deliver (NMS 3.14)
- ensure that any measure taken relating to avoidable hazards are removed as is consistent with a domestic setting. Risk reduction does not lead to an institutional feel. In particular children and young people are not to be required to sign for receipt of pocket money, young meetings and fire drills (NMS 10.3)
- ensure there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the home. In particular reports relating to review of quality of care make clear consultation with parents has taken place and clearly demonstrates improvements in the quality of care available to children. (NMS 21.1)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Children learn that staff recognise their achievements as readily as their needs. The Registered Manager carefully considers individual children's needs and chooses key workers with the qualities that most suitably match the child. A member of staff said, 'We have time to talk about things, we go out, we talk about how he is doing.' This approach helps children learn to trust and have an appropriate reliance on the adults responsible for them, and builds their feelings of safety and security.

Staff pay close attention to children's behaviour and underlying needs, so children live in an environment in which their physical and emotional wellbeing improves. They work effectively to ensure that improvements in children's health are noted and shared with other professionals, so that any treatment can be reviewed. A member of staff said, 'Now he seems to have control over his behaviour.' Children learn they can influence improvements in their wellbeing by making positive choices. This approach increases the likelihood of improved wellbeing in adulthood.

Children's educational attainment is improved, considering the point from which they started. Children attend school every day and receive additional support within the classroom so they can fully participate. The ethos of the home is the promotion of education in the widest sense. This is particularly evident in the level of activities that children are encouraged to take part in. A member of staff said, 'They have farm jobs before the day starts to help them get some experience and I think this is vocational training for work.' Children learn that education is an important part of their daily routine. This increases the likelihood of better educational and vocational achievement.

Children receive support, so they can safely enjoy activities aimed at helping them feel what it is like to belong. Staff are creative in ensuring that children have opportunities to contribute to their existing and wider community. 'It was lambing season and the kids were a part of that it was a really busy time and they had to really concentrate.' This builds children's confidence and boosts feelings of safety and security.

Staff support children to have contact with their families where it is safe to do so. They are aware of how crucial it is for children to maintain links with those who are important to them, including members of their extended families. A social worker said about help by staff regarding contact, 'We were delighted that they have responded in this way.' This approach supports children in further understanding of their circumstances and developing their individual identity.

Children experience plentiful opportunities for play and activities essential to their ongoing development. Staff provide a nurturing and structured routine with clear

boundaries and expectations. A member of staff about improvements in behaviour, 'The child has not been testing out as much.' This approach builds children's awareness of the choices they make in their daily lives. It also promotes the development of independent living skills.

Quality of care

outstanding

Quality of care is judged outstanding. Staff are highly effective at building meaningful relationships with children. A member of staff said, 'We have structure and routine and that helps.' 'They are in an environment where they get to try out new activities.' This approach builds trust and helps children gain a better understanding of the different responsibilities of children and adults.

Children experience an exceptional approach to improving their overall emotional and physical health. Children live in a rural environment that is run as a small holding. They are expected to participate in this setting in age appropriate ways. A member of staff said, 'They make the connection between what happens on the farm, they ask, is that our meat and our lamb and they love that.' 'We go on really interesting walks and from a health point of view they are getting fitter and healthier.' Children live in a setting which increases their understanding of the natural world, and this enriches their lives.

Staff provide support to children to help them express their views and feelings about life in the home. Children's relationships and the impact of their behaviour towards one another are explored within young people's meetings. Children are invited to talk about activities they would like take part in and about their choices of food. A member of staff said about requests that children make, 'They don't ask for things generally that are unrealistic.' This approach validates children's experiences and builds feelings of belonging.

Children are required to sign for receipt of their pocket money, to indicate participation in fire drills and their child friendly care plans. This practice is at odds with the investment staff make in establishing trusting relationships. It is not necessary and invites compliance by vulnerable children with practices that are institutionalised.

Staff understand the impact that external factors can have on children's behaviour. Staff support children to understand the reasons why some things they want to see happen would not be in their best interest. 'We notice if any child is upset we start to monitor their behaviour and see if there is any pattern.' Children experience sensitive responses from staff and this promotes their development of empathy for others.

Children learn that staff notice the improvements they make. Children receive information about their plan, progress and achievements in a narrative pictorial form

that is very child friendly. A child said, 'These are the child friendly ones, the others are the adult ones and have loads of writing and they take you ages to read.' Staff build relationships with children that help them realise their potential.

Staff are aware of the need to preserve and promote understanding by children of their individual cultural identity. Children's cultural backgrounds and needs are promoted and respected. They are encouraged to say how they feel about their contact arrangements. This approach raises children's awareness of their cultural heritage and contributes to their developmental identity

Keeping children and young people safe good

Safeguarding is judged good. Children are safe and staff know what to do to ensure their safety. Staff take any concern raised by children seriously and manage these in their best interests. Staff understand that children's difficult life experiences can shape their perceptions and relationships with others. A member of staff said about what do if a child says something worrying, 'If a young person told me something I would tell them I couldn't keep it to myself.' Children learn that staff can keep themselves and others safe. This approach helps reduce children's anxieties and frees them up to take part in everyday life.

Children experience a swift and helpful response to any incidents of bullying. The vulnerabilities and needs of children who may instigate or be the recipient of this behaviour are responded to. A member of staff said 'There hasn't been any more bullying.' Children learn staff are effective in managing any unacceptable behaviour.

Children rarely go missing from the home. Staff know what to do to alert others who need to know and how to gain assistance. They work effectively with police resulting in speedier information sharing in this event. A member of staff said about the systems in place, 'We have everything ready just in case.' This means there is no unnecessary delay in efforts to locate vulnerable children.

Children receive sensitive help from staff to explore feelings that can overwhelm them and lead to their putting themselves at risk. A member of staff said about working with children, 'I don't know what it feels like to have gone through what the child has experienced, I can only try and imagine.' This approach validates children's thoughts and feelings. It promotes their increased understanding about choices and helps defuse potentially challenging situations.

Staff have received in house training about how to verbally respond to children during restraints, which is aimed at trying to reduce the need for physical intervention. This was delivered by the responsible individual and is based on an in-house model. This approach is not accordance with the home's statement of purpose or its behaviour management policy. Staff should not use any response that is outside of the home's behaviour management policy and is not demonstrably

evidence-based.

Children live in a home that actively promotes and reinforces positive behaviour through an approach of recognition and reward. Staff restrain children only where they are at risk of harming themselves, others or causing significant damage. A member of staff said about physically intervening to keep a child safe 'You only do it when you have to.' Children learn staff will keep them and others safe, when they put themselves and others at significant risk.

Staff need to ensure that any sanction is carefully evaluated for effectiveness. This is to ensure the sanction is the best way of helping a child make the link between their behaviour and its consequences. A member of staff said about how to respond to improved behaviour sensitively, 'We recognise when they do something, small treats, or a pat on the back or thumbs up and thanks, because some children can't deal with the praise, it is too much for them.' Children receive care from staff who know best how to help them recognise the progress they make.

Leadership and management

good

Leadership and management are judged good. The Registered Manager has been at the home since it opened and is suitably qualified and experienced. Children know that they can talk to the Registered Manager whenever they want. Children live in home where staff are effectively managed. There are no requirements or recommendations outstanding from the previous inspections.

The Registered Manager has not kept up with practice developments within the area of trauma in which the home specialises, and this can impact the behaviour of children the home accommodates. Diminished understanding by the Registered Manager of up to date practice developments and approaches can lead to unintentional reinforcing of behaviours. Children's opportunities to increase their understanding about their underlying needs and lessen risks to themselves and others are reduced.

Children and staff are visited on a monthly basis by an independent person as required by legislation. Staff can speak to someone who is not involved in the day to day running of the home, as can the children if they so wish. Independent visitor reports do not demonstrate adequate consultation with parents and or carers. Inadequate consultation with parents and or carers can undermine systems to ensure critical examination and scrutiny about the way the home is managed.

Reports required of the Registered Manager do not sufficiently demonstrate how the quality of care children receive is improved in practice. It was evident that consultation with parents takes place however the impact of this on the quality of care for children is not clear. A senior member of staff said, 'I'm always on the phone to parents, we give them forms to fill in to get their feedback.' Insufficient

consideration of the quality of care children receive can diminish the opportunities for ongoing improvement.

Children receive care that in the main is reflected within the home's statement of purpose and children's guide. Professionals who place children at the home are provided with good quality information that accurately reflects the home's functioning. The home's budget for children's clothing regularly exceeds the allocated amount. A senior member of staff said 'If they need it, they get it; they grow out of clothes really quick.' Children's material needs are very well met so they do not stand out from their peers.

Children live in a home that is well resourced and furnished to a high standard. The home is a large detached building which is homely, warm and comfortable. The external and internal fabric of the home is well maintained. Children's bedrooms reflect their individuality. Children and staff eat together in the large kitchen and there is a separate dining room. A member of staff said, 'We use this for birthdays, special occasions and at Christmas.' This helps children feel a sense of belonging and builds feelings of safety and security.

Children live in a home where the Registered Manager has a plan in place for its continued development, and this takes into account their individual needs. The plan is wide-ranging and evidences the home's continuing viability. All necessary health, safety and risk assessments are in place. Children can get on with their daily life, as their basic needs are assured by effective management of the home.

Staff compile high quality reports for children's looked after reviews and child friendly care plans. These documents help children and others understand the improved life chances children have as a result of the care they receive. A member of staff said, 'When I share the plan it's more about celebrating what the child has done and achieved.' Children receive a pictorial narrative of their lives, aiding understanding of their experiences at a time of increased vulnerability.

Children receive good support from a staff team who are sufficient in number and experience to meet their needs. The statement of purpose confirms the qualifications and experience of staff who demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the needs of the children they are responsible for. Children receive care and support from a stable consistent care team. This helps children feel safe and secure.

Children receive effective help so that their views are represented within their looked after reviews. These meetings take place within required timescales. Children's progress, achievements and accomplishments are the main focus of the reports staff write for looked after reviews. Children receive the consistent message from staff that they are making progress and that they will receive help to overcome any obstacles.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.