

SC449096

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and run by a local authority. It provides care for up to four children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in January 2021.

Four children were living at the home at the time of this inspection. Three of the children were spoken to during the inspection.

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 August 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	outstanding
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 6 August 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/08/2024	Full	Good
21/08/2023	Full	Outstanding
02/08/2022	Full	Good
31/01/2022	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are making progress from their starting points and have developed strong and trusting relationships with the adults who care for them. The staff team comprises a mixture of experienced and inexperienced staff, but they provide warmth, nurture and support to the children, led by a highly effective manager.

Children's experiences of education are mixed. Some children have made and sustained progress. For other children, staff continue to advocate strongly on their behalf to find provisions that will suit their learning needs.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities. One child told the inspector that he 'takes part in lots of activities' and 'looks forward to beating staff at games'. Staff consult children on a regular basis about food choices and activities they would like to do. Children personalise their bedrooms and have a say in the decor of the communal parts of the home. This demonstrates that the children's wishes influence the care that they receive.

Transitions for children moving into the home are well planned. Staff discuss, in a sensitive manner, the new children coming to live at the home with those who already in residence. This approach helps positive relationships to develop between children prior to moving in. The therapist collaborating with the team adds her thoughts on how to manage the group of children living together as part of the process.

Staff understand that time spent with family and friends is important to children and they help them to maintain these relationships where appropriate. This helps to maintain the children's sense of belonging and identity.

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

Children are clear that they feel safe living at the home and can identify staff that they would go to if they needed help, including the manager.

Key-work sessions take place regularly. Staff understand the children's needs and behaviours well. Staff use key working to discuss with children any areas of concern they have as well as using sessions to enhance children's understanding of their own history and how to begin to manage their own emotions and behaviour.

Staff regularly review and update care plans and risk assessments to meet the needs of individual children. The risk assessments use a traffic light system to explain the level of risk a child faces and have clear strategies for staff to follow to help minimise and reduce the risks. However, in one risk assessment the recording did not match the traffic light system. This could be confusing, particularly for those staff less familiar with the children's needs.

Staff use individualised incentives, praise and positive relationships effectively to manage behaviour. Occasionally consequences are used, but children find these fair and can understand the need for them.

There have been episodes of children going missing from the home. Staff follow detailed protocols, and look for and try to contact children first before involving police. Records of these episodes are clear about the steps staff take to find children and return them to their home as quickly and safely as possible. Children are spoken to by a professional independent of the home when they return to ensure that steps are taken to prevent further episodes of going missing.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager is an experienced and excellent leader who understands the needs of the children and her staff exceptionally well. She works effectively with her deputy to share tasks and time with staff and children. They both have a visible presence in the home as well as fulfilling their own roles to a high standard.

The manager is ambitious for children and has high expectations of her staff team. The manager is highly motivated and committed to ensuring that children experience the best possible care. Her oversight and influence at handovers, team meetings and supervision sessions guide the team's practice. One member of staff said: 'I've never had support like it in any other job.' The manager guides staff through situations and focuses on safety planning in all circumstances. As a result, staff feel comfortable and able to deal with difficult situations and issues that arise.

Staff benefit from a broad range of training that helps them to be effective in their roles. The training is enhanced by the manager's approach and creation of a supportive culture that gives the staff confidence to continually reflect and learn from their practice.

The manager has comprehensive monitoring systems and is aware of all aspects of the care of the children and the practice of staff. She is supportive to staff when needed but will also challenge staff effectively to ensure that children receive the best care possible.

The manager ensures that research and theory form part of everyday planning in the home. This helps staff to be able to speak to and write about children in a nurturing and therapeutically informed way. However, this is not the same across the whole of the staff team. Sometimes child friendly language is not used in documents that children can read.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and that they understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person should ensure that the level of evaluated risk is clear in risk assessments. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 42, paragraph 9.10)

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: SC449096

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Durham County Council

Registered provider address: Fostering & Adoption Team, Spectrum 8, Spectrum Business Park, Seaham SR7 7TT

Responsible individual: Paul Rudd

Registered manager: Lauren Gibson

Inspector

Sue Atkinson-Millmoor, Social Care Inspector

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