

1233310

Registered provider: Birtenshaw

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is part of a large charitable organisation. It provides care for up to three children who may experience social and emotional difficulties and have learning disabilities.

At the time of the inspection, two children were living at the home. Since the last inspection, one young person has moved out, and one child has moved into the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in January 2025.

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 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	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 17 September 2024

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
17/09/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
07/11/2023	Full	Good
27/07/2022	Full	Good
11/01/2022	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children make significant progress across aspects of their welfare, including their physical, social, emotional and behavioural development, and they have consistency and stability in their lives. They enjoy warm and secure relationships with staff and sustain their positive attachments. A parent said, 'The support has been great. My child has really settled. He is so much calmer, and more patient.'

Managers and staff provide robust support for children moving into or out of the home through a well-planned, collaborative approach tailored to each child's individual needs. This includes ensuring continuity of care and emotional support, which helps empower the child and promote their independence.

Children live in a spacious and warm environment where they can decorate and personalise their bedrooms. Their artwork is displayed throughout the home, creating a sense of belonging. Staff support children by incorporating their sensory needs into daily care.

Staff are dedicated to promoting children's independence by focusing on self-care and healthy snack preparation. By integrating these goals into individual plans, the children make good progress. Regular reviews of their objectives, along with celebrations of accomplishments involving parents and social workers, boost the children's self-esteem and independence, fostering a positive and nurturing environment.

The children attend the same school, which is run by the provider. Staff ensure that children attend school as agreed in their care plans. Staff have good relationships with the children's school. Effective handovers between school and the staff at the home help to ensure that children receive continuity and consistency of care.

Staff know the children's likes and dislikes very well and carefully arrange activities to suit, such as visiting the beach, playing games and sensory play. The provider's school also offers summer holiday activities, including swimming, dancing and gym activities. This gives children the chance to meet with their friends. These opportunities enhance children's experiences.

Staff help children to spend time with people who are important to them. The manager advocates for children and supports them to have increased time with loved ones. This ensures that children maintain important relationships.

Children's wishes are central to the running of the home, and they are given choices throughout the day. Staff use a variety of communication methods to seek each child's views. To support this, staff have created folders containing activity options and meal choices, enabling children to express their preferences for the upcoming week.

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

Children's care records, plans and assessments are written in a way that brings children to life for the adults reading them. The quality of these records enhances staff's understanding of children's needs and the care that they provide to children.

Staff work collaboratively with other professionals and parents to understand children's complex needs. Managers and staff are strong advocates for children. Staff communicate well with relevant professionals to provide an all-round approach to children's care.

Children are supported by staff who know them well. Staff respond well to any behaviours that challenge and are committed to finding different and innovative ways to manage situations that children may find difficult to cope with. This approach reduces children's anxieties and helps to minimise incidents.

Staff ratios are carefully managed to ensure that children who require constant supervision consistently receive it. Physical intervention is used only as a last resort to maintain safety. Staff are appropriately trained and, following any incident, they engage with the child to explore the underlying reasons for the behaviour and help prevent future occurrences. However, staff debriefs have not always been conducted in a timely manner.

Restrictions are in place at the home, including locking the front and back doors to prevent children from leaving and encountering potential harm. These measures are based on comprehensive assessments of each child's unique needs and are carefully documented. However, the use of locks on internal doors has not been regularly reviewed, and as a result, their continued relevance and effectiveness in ensuring the safety of the children have not been robustly assessed.

Staff understand the importance of meeting children's health needs. There is a well-managed system for administering and recording medications in a safe and controlled way.

There is good communication with safeguarding partners in the local authority. Managers are aware of the additional safeguarding vulnerabilities for disabled children and what those inherent risk factors may look like. Staff understand the importance of an open safeguarding culture and as a result know how to recognise, report and act on any safeguarding concerns that they may have.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager has taken effective action to address previous shortfalls, introducing robust systems for oversight of daily operations and children's progress. Some areas, such as staff qualifications and appraisals, show limited progress in meeting scheduled timeframes. While some staff are working toward their qualifications, a number remain overdue. The manager continues to work with the assessor to support staff in achieving their awards.

The manager is very committed to the children and staff, and he is very well supported by a stable and consistent staff team. They work well together and have a shared vision for the home and how they intend to provide the best care for the children. They have created a culture of high expectations. As a result, children thrive in this nurturing environment.

Managers offer consistent supervision to staff, and team meetings are consistently well attended. Staff speak positively about the supportive nature of the leadership. New team members benefit from comprehensive inductions, which include mentoring by experienced colleagues and additional guidance during their probation period to help them understand their responsibilities.

Managers advocate on behalf of children when they identify shortfalls in the service that they are receiving from other professionals. They escalate their concerns without delay when this is necessary.

There is a range of core training and specialised training available to help staff meet children's needs. However, refresher training for some staff is out of date. This omission has the potential to compromise the children's safety and the staff's ability to update their knowledge.

The home's statement of purpose has been updated by the manager, however, has not been sent to Ofsted within the expected timescale. This prevents the regulator from having oversight of staffing changes.

The manager shares information with other people who are important in the children's lives. A social worker said, 'Communication is very good. Strategies are shared to ensure a consistent approach is adopted, which ensures the young person has the best 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, The 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 registered person must ensure that— the privacy of children is appropriately protected; children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises— is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home; is necessary and proportionate; is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21 (a)(b)(c)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)) Leaders and managers must ensure that the locks on the internal doors to communal areas are removed and that locks are only used for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.	30 August 2025
For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained— the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"); or a qualification which the registered person considers to be equivalent to the Level 3 Diploma. The relevant date is— in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the	30 August 2025

date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home; or

in the case of an individual who was working in a care role in a home on 1st April 2014, 1st April 2016.

The registered person may defer the relevant date if the individual—

does not work, or has not worked, in a care role in a home for a prolonged period; or

works, or has worked, in a care role in a home on a part-time basis.

(Regulation 32 (4)(a)(b) (5)(a)(b) (6)(a)(b))

This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff have their performance appraised each year to address any practice issues. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.5)
- The registered manager should ensure that all core staff complete mandatory refresher training relevant to caring for children, and that this is done before any training expires. For example, some staff's training in areas such as first aid and fire safety has expired. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)
- The registered person should ensure that when the statement of purpose has been reviewed, that a copy of this is shared with the regulator. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.5)
- The registered person should ensure that, after reviewing the use of control, discipline and restraint, there are timely discussions with staff to identify and amend practice as needed. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)

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: 1233310

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Birtenshaw

Registered provider address: Birtenshaw, Darwen Road, Bromley Cross, Bolton BL7 9AB

Responsible individual: David Reid

Registered manager: Lee Colbridge

Inspector

Jennifer Quest, Social Care Inspector

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