

2628534

Registered provider: Birtenshaw

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is privately owned and run. It is registered to provide care for one child who may have learning disabilities.

The home and the manager registered with Ofsted in April 2021.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 May 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **requires improvement to be good**

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

Date of last inspection: not previously inspected

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children's moves into the home are well planned. Initial risk assessments reflect careful consideration regarding whether the staff team has the skills to meet children's needs. Consultation with children's placing authorities is a strength of the team. Children are involved in the planning and decision-making in preparation for their move to the home.

Children are happy in their home and are beginning to settle in well. They are building good relationships with the staff team. When asked to describe the home and the staff team, a child said, 'They're lovely.' Children are encouraged to talk about their views and feelings. Visual emotion boards are effective in helping children to communicate when they are struggling to verbalise how they are feeling.

There has been an increase in challenging behaviours as children settle in and seek reassurance that this will be their long-term home. However, children are making some progress from their starting points at the home. For example, they listen to guidance from staff and talk about their behaviour and how to improve it. A social worker said, 'Everyone is on the same page and open to new suggestions to support [name of child]. The staff team is working well to understand her needs and behaviours.'

Children have 100% attendance at school. The staff team works closely with children's schools to promote a consistent level of communication. Children are working to a curriculum which focuses on developing their life skills. Staff work alongside schools to promote children's independence skills in the home by incorporating tasks into children's monthly targets and presenting them with certificates on completion.

The staff team actively works with other professionals to monitor children's well-being and ensure that their health needs are being met. Children are encouraged to eat a balanced diet and sustain a healthy weight. Staff support them to plan nutritious meals and eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables. Children regularly engage in lots of exercise, in and out of school, such as walking and swimming.

Children are encouraged to share their views about the care they receive and how the home operates. Monthly visual key-work sessions obtain children's views about how they are progressing and identify any support they require from the staff team. Weekly children's meetings provide children with the opportunity to talk about things they would like to change in the home. The manager makes changes accordingly and records evidence showing that children's views are always considered.

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

Children told the inspector that they feel safe living in the home. Staff provide children with consistent boundaries and routines, which are important for children who struggle with any changes to their daily plans. Children are involved in planning their days. They understand how the home operates and they are kept informed about the staff who will be working with them on a day-to-day basis.

Behaviour support plans and risk assessments are thorough. They cover all aspects of children's risk-taking behaviour and vulnerabilities. They provide the staff team with clear and comprehensive strategies to follow to help children to manage their behaviour effectively. Where control measures are in place and reduce significant risks for children, up-to-date risk assessments remain in place to ensure that the staff team remains vigilant about safeguarding children.

There have been no safeguarding concerns reported to social care, and children do not go missing from home. Staff understand the risks for children and work effectively to keep them safe. Children feel listened to by the staff team. Therefore, there have been no complaints or allegations made.

Staff use de-escalation strategies to support children to manage their behaviour. Restraint is used as last resort to keep children and others around them safe. The manager's evaluation of restraint records demonstrates that the measures used are necessary and proportionate. Children are spoken to after an incident, using their preferred communication methods. This is effective in helping children to identify ways that staff can help them with their behaviour or things that could have been done differently.

Children are encouraged to keep themselves safe and make better choices. For example, when children try to harm themselves, staff respond appropriately by using distraction techniques to redirect them. The manager works with the staff team to reflect on reasons why children's behaviour may escalate to try to reduce further incidents of children hurting themselves.

The home is safe and secure. Medication is administered, stored and recorded safely. Medication audits are facilitated regularly, which ensures that there is effective monitoring of medicine management.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The home has a female staff team. The manager plans to introduce male staff to the team when she feels this is appropriate to the needs of the children. However, the home's statement of purpose fails to provide a description of how the home currently promotes appropriate role models of both sexes for children in their day-to-day care.

The manager's oversight of children's care plans is not robust. When children are subject to a court-directed order in relation to their movements, the details of the order and its impact on the child are not included in the child's internal care plan. Equally, the statement of purpose does not reflect how the home has been adapted to meet the needs of children who are subject to an order.

Staff debriefs are completed following a restraint. However, they have been completed by a staff member involved in the restraint. The manager should ensure that debriefs with staff are completed by the registered manager or someone designated by the manager who was not involved in the incident. This provides staff with support and guidance from someone independent who can review the incident and discuss any lessons learned.

Staff are supported by a manager who provides clear guidance about how she expects children to be cared for. The manager welcomes staff suggestions about effective ways of working with children and discusses ideas in monthly team meetings to agree safer ways of working. Consequently, the staff team works well together, and communication is positive.

Staff and the manager receive regular practice-related supervision. Staff's annual appraisals have been scheduled. Staff contribute to their own appraisal goals as part of their continual professional development. Staff personnel files demonstrate appropriate references have been sought for staff prior to their employment. However, the references require further scrutiny, in line with safer recruitment, by verifying them with the referee and recording the outcome.

Mandatory training is mostly up to date, with staff scheduled to attend any outstanding training in the next few weeks. When training specific to the needs of the children has been recommended in psychological assessments, this has not been prioritised. The manager has not been proactive in sourcing resources to support staff with their knowledge in areas such as trauma and attachment until face-to-face training has become available again.

The manager recognises the home's strengths and weaknesses and sets targets to improve the service the home provides. A transparent and structured development plan demonstrates that the home is in the early stages of growth and that there are still areas that need improving. The manager completes detailed monthly monitoring, which keeps her focused on any key areas of development.

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 compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. (Regulation 16 (1)) Specifically, the registered manager should ensure that the home's statement of purpose includes a description of the accommodation offered by the home, including how the accommodation has been adapted to the needs of children in relation to a court-directed order. In addition, as the staff team is all of one sex, a description of how the home promotes appropriate role models of both sexes should be included in the statement of purpose.	2 July 2021
The registered person must ensure that— within 48 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(b)(i)) Specifically, the registered manager should ensure that staff debriefs following a restraint are completed by someone who is authorised to do so and who has not been involved in the restraint.	2 July 2021
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; are kept up to date. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b))	2 July 2021

Specifically, the registered manager should ensure that children's care plans include comprehensive and up-to-date information if a court-directed order is in place and how this affects the child.	
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff are provided with training specific to children's needs, such as trauma and attachment, within appropriate timescales. Where training is not immediately available, the registered person should use other resources to support and guide the staff team in these areas until training becomes available. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)
- The registered person should ensure that, as set out in regulations 31 to 33, good employment practice is maintained. Employment references should be verified by telephone conversation with the person providing the reference and there should be written evidence of this process. ('Guide to the children's homes 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: 2628534

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: Rachel Taylor

Inspector

Cheryl Field, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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