

# 2667746

**Birchwood Children's Services Limited**

Monitoring visit

## **Information about this children's home**

The home is owned by a private company and provides care for up to five children with specialist educational needs.

The home registered with Ofsted in May 2022.

The registered manager post has been vacant since January 2024.

There were two children living in the home at the time of this inspection.

**Inspection date:** 19 August 2024

## **This monitoring visit**

The home was judged inadequate at the full inspection on 2 and 3 July. Due to the concerns identified during this inspection, Ofsted issued four compliance notices under regulation 12, the protection of children standard, regulation 13, the leadership and management standard, regulation 14, the care planning standard and regulation 32, the fitness of workers.

This monitoring visit was undertaken to monitor the provider's compliance with these notices.

During this visit, inspectors identified further serious shortfalls in the leadership and management arrangements at the setting and poor practice relating to safeguarding and risk management.

Since the previous inspection, children have made allegations against staff. These allegations were not appropriately responded to. Two senior staff members were made aware of one allegation. However, there was a delay in sharing this information with the management team to enable appropriate actions to be taken. This does not demonstrate that staff have a good understanding of safeguarding practice and processes.

Staff have completed some training to enhance their knowledge and skills. However, staff do not understand their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding and protecting children. This does not demonstrate that leaders and managers have evaluated the impact of this training in order to develop staff practice.

Risk management plans contain inaccurate and conflicting information.

Records do not demonstrate that safeguarding incidents are well managed, and there is limited information about the actions staff need to take to keep children safe.

One child was subject to a court directed order. This order required two staff to be in place to keep the child safe. Since the last inspection, the child has been missing from home. Staff did not take sufficient action to prevent these incidents occurring. As a result, staff did not adhere to the court directed order that enabled them to prevent the child from leaving the home. This places him at risk in the community.

The leadership and management arrangements are not sufficient. Leaders and managers do not ensure that there are robust systems in place to review and evaluate the quality of care provided for children effectively.

The manager does not demonstrate that he has sufficient oversight of the setting. He could not provide relevant information in relation to the actions he had taken to ensure that children's care is safe and supports them to make progress.

Internal and external monitoring of the home are ineffective as weaknesses in staff practice have not been addressed and managed. In addition, quality assurance processes, including audits, have not identified shortfalls in staff practice and the management arrangements.

It is Ofsted's view that the provider has not taken sufficient action to meet the compliance notices issued under regulation 12, the protection of children standard, and regulation 13, the leadership and management standard.

Prior to the monitoring visit taking place. The organisation submitted their voluntary cancellation form for the setting. The provider is working closely with local authorities to plan for the children moving to new homes.

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement            |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| 02/07/2024      | Full            | Inadequate                      |
| 31/05/2023      | Full            | Good                            |
| 28/02/2023      | Full            | Requires improvement to be good |

# 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 with the given timescales.

| Requirement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Due date       |
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| <p>The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child;</p> <p>help each child to understand how to keep safe;</p> <p>have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;</p> <p>understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;</p> <p>take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare;</p> <p>are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; and</p> <p>that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi)(b))</p> <p>Specifically, the manager must ensure that all staff take sufficient action when there are concerns of substance misuse and that all risk management plans contain strategies for staff to follow to reduce the risk of harm to children.</p> | 30 August 2024 |

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| <p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose;</p> <p>ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate;</p> <p>ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child;</p> <p>ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child;</p> <p>understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home;</p> <p>demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on—</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.<br/>(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h))</p> | <p>30 August 2024</p> |
| <p>The care planning standard is that children—</p> <p>receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and</p> <p>have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <p>30 August 2024</p> |

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| <p>that children are admitted to the home only if their needs are within the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the home is to provide care and accommodation, as set out in the home's statement of purpose;</p> <p>that arrangements are in place to—</p> <p>ensure the effective induction of each child into the home.</p> <p>manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and</p> <p>plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child's placing authority;</p> <p>that each child's relevant plans are followed;</p> <p>that the child's placing authority is contacted, and a review of that child's relevant plans is requested, if—</p> <p>the registered person considers that the child is at risk of harm or has concerns that the care provided for the child is inadequate to meet the child's needs.</p> <p>(Regulation 14 (1) (2)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(iii)(c)(e)(i))</p> |                |
| <p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.</p> <p>The requirements are that—</p> <p>the individual is of integrity and good character;</p> <p>the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification, and skills for the work that the individual is to perform;</p> <p>full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2.</p> <p>(Regulation 32 (1) (3)(a)(b)(d))</p> <p>Specifically, this relates to the registered person ensuring that all staff have up-to-date DBS checks, all references are present and any gaps in employment are explored.</p> <p>This requirement is restated from the last inspection.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 30 August 2024 |
| <p>The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who—</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 30 August 2024 |

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| <p>understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;</p> <p>use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>understand and apply the home's statement of purpose.</p> <p>ensure that staff—</p> <p>understand and apply the home's statement of purpose;</p> <p>protect and promote each child's welfare;</p> <p>treat each child with dignity and respect;</p> <p>provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background; and</p> <p>help each child to understand and manage the impact of any experience of abuse or neglect.</p> <p>(Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(c))</p> <p>Specifically, leaders and managers must ensure that care is delivered in line with the home's aims and objectives as set out in the statement of purpose. Additionally, that the home is made homely, walls are painted where there are marks and attention is given to ceilings where there is mould.</p> |                       |
| <p>The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>help each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans;</p> <p>support each child's learning and development, including helping the child to develop independent study skills and, where appropriate, helping the child to complete independent study;</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <p>30 August 2024</p> |

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| <p>understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers;</p> <p>promote opportunities for each child to learn informally; and</p> <p>help each child to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child's relevant plans.<br/>(Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(x))</p> <p>This particularly relates to the registered person ensuring that children have clear plans in place around their educational needs and for how staff will support them to attend education on a full-time basis.</p>                                                                                    |                |
| <p>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.</p> <p>The registered person must provide a copy of the statement of purpose to HMCI and make a copy of it available upon request to—</p> <p>The registered person must—</p> <p>keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and</p> <p>notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision.<br/>(Regulation 16 (1) (3)(a)(b))</p> <p>In particular, the home's statement of purpose must be kept up to date and contain accurate information.</p> | 30 August 2024 |
| <p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and</p> <p>any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises—</p> <p>is intended to safeguard each child accommodated in the home;</p> <p>is necessary and proportionate;</p> <p>is kept under review and, if necessary, revised; and</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 30 August 2024 |



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| <p>allows children as much freedom as is possible when balanced against the need to protect them and keep them safe. (Regulation 21 (b)(c)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the locks being removed from the gym and kitchen doors.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                       |
| <p>The registered person must—</p> <p>ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction;</p> <p>ensure that each permanent appointment of an employee is subject to the satisfactory completion of a period of probation; and</p> <p>provide each employee with a job description outlining the employee's responsibilities.</p> <p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>undertake appropriate continuing professional development;</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and</p> <p>have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year.<br/>(Regulation 33 (1)(a)(b) (4)(a)(b)(c))</p> | <p>30 August 2024</p> |
| <p>The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out—</p> <p>how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home.</p> <p>The registered person must keep the behaviour management policy under review and, where appropriate, revise it.</p> <p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline, or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes—</p> <p>the name of the child;</p> <p>details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure;</p>                                                                             |                       |

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| <p>the date, time, and location of the use of the measure;</p> <p>a description of the measure and its duration;</p> <p>details of any methods used, or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure;</p> <p>the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used;</p> <p>the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and</p> <p>a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure;</p> <p>within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")—</p> <p>has spoken to the user about the measure; and</p> <p>has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and</p> <p>within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (1)(a) (2) (3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c))</p> <p>Specifically, this relates to the registered person ensuring that all information in records of debriefs with staff is consistent with the information in the restraint record. Furthermore, when a child makes a complaint, that this is treated seriously, and prompt action is taken to address it.</p> |                       |
| <p>The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which—</p> <p>include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child.</p> <p>are kept up to date; and</p> <p>are signed and dated by the author of each entry.</p> <p>(Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c))</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <p>30 August 2024</p> |

## **Recommendation**

- When a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations', Page 45, paragraph 9.30)

## **Information about this inspection**

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the children's home since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

## **Children's home details**

**Unique reference number:** 2667746

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Birchwood Children Services Limited

**Registered provider address:** Regent house, Regent Street, Blackburn BB1 6BH

**Responsible individual:** Lisa Goulding

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

## **Inspectors**

Judith Birchall, Social Care Inspector  
Sally Croft, Social Care Inspector

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