

2667746

Registered provider: Birchwood Children's Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned by private company and provides care for up to five children. The provider states in its statement of purpose that care is provided for children with learning difficulties.

The registered manager has been in post since May 2022.

Inspection dates: 28 February and 1 March 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date

Not previously inspected

Inspection type**Inspection judgement**

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Due to shortfalls identified in safeguarding practice and leadership and management at the home, children's overall experiences and progress are not consistently good.

This is the home's first inspection. Since the home registered, three children have moved in. One child moved out after a short time. However, this was done in a planned way and the child was fully supported. Following this, the manager and staff reflected together on lessons learned. At the time of the inspection, two children were living in the home. They moved into the home at their own pace, and short stories that describe social situations were used to help children understand what was happening.

The home is well maintained and nicely furnished. It is spacious and provides welcoming rooms that feel homely. Children are encouraged to personalise their rooms with their photos and belongings. Consequently, children have settled into the home well.

The manager has requested further information from one child's placing authority. However, she has not continued to escalate her request for this information. As a result, vital information about one child's care was not sufficiently shared.

Children attend education where they are making progress. Staff continue to help children to engage in education when they are at home. For example, staff encourage children to read on a regular basis. This helps to enhance children's learning and supports their educational aspirations.

Children take part in a range of activities, including youth clubs, going for walks in the community and attending the local gym. One child told the inspector how much he enjoys his weekly music lessons and looks forward to them. Additionally, achievements and rewards in the home are celebrated in creative ways. For example, the children can choose from the 'prize and surprise' baskets. This helps to promote positive behaviour for children. Each child has their own book that celebrates their achievements and activities. This helps to provide children with memories of their time spent living at the home.

There are various ways that children's voices are captured. One professional said, 'Staff value the voice of the child.' Children are encouraged to take part in their annual reviews, and the use of 'you say, we do' forms means that children feel listened to. Where necessary, children have been supported by staff to access independent advocacy.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

The assessment of risk is an area that requires improvement. Risk assessments for individual children are not always kept up to date. The inspector found that not all risk assessments are of good quality and some areas are not sufficiently assessed. Managers and staff lack professional curiosity around their understanding of risk. Consequently, some risks are not well understood. This has the potential to cause harm to children.

Leaders and managers have not consistently escalated concerns with the placing authority to obtain all necessary information to keep a child safe.

Restraints in the home have been used as a last resort. However, the manager has not always debriefed staff or evaluated the incidents for their effectiveness and necessity. This is a breach in regulation and is a missed opportunity to identify any learning.

Not all staff understand the supervision requirements in place for one child when they are gaming on their computer. This is despite this being a known risk. Additionally, staff have not received training in online safety. This does not help children to stay safe online or help them to understand the dangers they may face.

The inspector found that children's missing-from-care plans are variable in quality. For one child, this information was clear and detailed. However, for the other child, there was missing and incorrect information. Furthermore, not all staff consistently understand what action they must take when a child goes missing. This was addressed with the manager during the inspection. The manager took immediate action to ensure that all children's missing-from-care plans are clear and accurate.

Medication systems in the home are robust. There is safe storage in place for all medicines, including controlled drugs. Effective partnership working with the community nurse team means that there is a suitable healthcare plan in place. Staff have received specialist training to meet children's individual needs. Furthermore, all staff are trained in medication administration. This helps to support children's health needs.

The manager ensures that fire practices in the home are safe. Each child has a personal emergency evacuation plan that provides staff with details on the support children require in the event of a fire. All staff are suitably trained in fire safety. One child regularly attends fire cadets. He takes pride in his knowledge of this and discussed the work that he carries out.

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

The manager is experienced, qualified and suitable. Staff say that she is approachable and supportive. The manager is supported by a deputy. Both are

committed and passionate about their role. There is a consistent staff team in place and suitable staffing levels support children with complex needs. Staff say that they work well together.

Shortfalls were identified in the leadership and management of the home. The manager's lack of monitoring and oversight has led to children's plans not all being in place. Inconsistent information was found and not all plans are regularly reviewed. Consequently, staff have not received the right information and skills to care for children effectively and keep them safe.

Staff have not received all necessary training, for example training in attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), deprivation of liberty safeguards and missing from care. As a result, staff's ability to meet children's needs is compromised.

Staff rosters do not record the actual hours that staff work as per regulation. The manager has taken immediate action in respect of this and has made the necessary changes in line with regulation.

Staff receive regular, good-quality supervision sessions. Supervision records show reflective discussions between managers and staff about the children in their care and the quality of practice in the home. Team meetings provide an additional opportunity for staff to discuss children's experiences.

Feedback from professionals is positive. One professional said, 'The staff have built positive relationships with [name of child]. This is huge for [name of child].' Another professional told the inspector that since moving into the home, there has been a positive change in the child's presentation.

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, 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
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans; seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs; if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (a)(b)(c)) This specifically relates to ensuring that: all looked after children's documentation is in place; all relevant information is appropriately shared; the manager escalates and challenges local authorities appropriately.	14 April 2023
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— 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; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;	14 April 2023

manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; 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)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)) This specifically relates to ensuring that risk assessments are accurate, detailed and regularly reviewed and that all staff fully understand all children's vulnerabilities.	
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— 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; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(h)) This specifically relates to ensuring that information is shared effectively with the staff team. The manager must have suitable monitoring and reviewing systems in place so that all	14 April 2023

plans are accurate and regularly reviewed. Furthermore, all staff must receive training in ADHD, internet safety, deprivation of liberty and missing from care.	
The registered person must ensure that— 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— the name of the child; details of the child’s behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the name of the person who used the measure (“the user”), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure; 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”)— has spoken to the user about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)) This specifically relates to ensuring that all staff receive debriefs following restraint practices and that the manager evaluates records for their effectiveness and necessity.	14 April 2023

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: 2667746

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Birchwood Children's Services Limited

Registered provider address: Regent House, Regent Street, Blackburn,
Lancashire BB1 6BH

Responsible individual: Salman Ugradar

Registered manager: Rachel Grima

Inspector

Judith Birchall, Social Care Inspector

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