

2679827

Registered provider: Birchwood Independence Ltd

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned by a private provider and provides care for one child with social and emotional difficulties. The child living in the home was living there at the time of the last full inspection.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since March 2022.

Inspection date: 18 September 2025

Date of last inspection: 29 April 2025

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

The inspector has looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection.

The inspector spent time with the child both alone and with the manager and staff. The child is making overall progress and is having positive experiences both in and outside the home.

The home environment is cosy and personalised to the child, with activities and photos reflecting their interests. Minor repairs are being carried out in the child's bedroom, and the removal of some furniture due to safety concerns has affected the space. The child has asked for the items to be returned and does not feel the risks have been reduced by their removal. Currently, there are not clear steps or timescales to manage this issue.

The child previously struggled with formal education but has been successfully supported to achieve a level 1 qualification. Staff also support the child to develop hobbies, providing access to creative materials and art sets. The manager and staff aspire for the child to succeed educationally and are supporting them to return to further education, in line with their individual needs and specialist assessment. There is effective multi-agency working and a focus on engaging the child in learning through activities they enjoy, although this is at an early stage.

The manager is not formally documenting complaints received from within or outside the home. This does not follow their own complaints policy. In some cases, issues have been progressed but not recorded; in others, there is no formal acknowledgement of the complaint, no adherence to timescales and missed opportunities to understand, act on and resolve concerns. This also means the child and others are not being advised of their rights or the process of escalation available to them.

Physical restraint is used with the child and is, overall, necessary and proportionate to prevent harm. Managers ensure records are maintained and staff are appropriately trained in restraint techniques. Oversight by managers identifies patterns and trends which can be shared with staff for learning.

The manager provides staff with training, support and plans that outline specific actions to take when there are concerns about the child's safety or wellbeing. However, staff do not consistently follow these plans. There are examples of preventable incidents, including one when the child went missing and staff actions did not follow the expectations in the plan. The manager recognised the concerns and provided some oversight. However, there are gaps in understanding and identifying ways to improve practice.

The manager and responsible individual have improved support since the last inspection, including providing more manager meetings, appraisals and external

mentoring, and increased joint working with clear roles and responsibilities. This support is ongoing and contributing to improvement. Managers demonstrate awareness of many of the home's strengths, but there are still shortfalls in identifying and addressing some weaknesses.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/04/2025	Full	Requires improvement to be good
08/05/2024	Full	Good
25/07/2023	Full	Good
05/09/2022	Full	Good

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that they apply the complaints procedure effectively, ensuring all complaints are logged, responded to in writing, with detail of actions taken and timescales. The outcome should be shared in writing and there ought to be note of whether those involved felt the desired outcomes were met or not, and any further action being taken and options for next steps by those involved. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.13)
- The registered person should ensure the behaviour management strategies and plans are understood and applied consistently at all times by staff to prevent avoidable incidents. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.34)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2679827

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Birchwood Independence Ltd

Registered provider address: 14 Highlands, Taunton TA1 4HP

Responsible individual: Claire Waddon

Registered manager: Gareth Hayman

Inspector

Ashley Arkless, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025