

2682000

Registered provider: Blue Elephant Childcare Ltd

Assurance inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home was registered in May 2022 and provides care for up to four children. It is owned and managed by a private locally based organisation that operates several other homes in the area.

Inspection date: 20 March 2023

Date of last inspection: 9 August 2022

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.

Inspectors have 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 care of children

Children talk positively about their experiences of living in the home. They say that they feel safe and identify carers who they can talk to. Three children have recently moved to this home from another home. Carers supported the children throughout the move, to limit the impact of this significant change. Carers create lovely bright memory books for children; however, there should be more focus on maintaining these and adding dates.

Carers have good conversations with children. They spend time discussing things of concern and praising children for their achievements. When there is a need to talk about sensitive issues, this is done well. When need or risk is identified, carers refer children to specialist organisations. When children choose not to engage with these organisations, carers continue to robustly discuss the presenting issues with children.

There is a lack of focus on education for children. One child living in the home attends full-time education. When children not attending school are provided with less than the required hours of tutoring, staff do not actively challenge other professionals to increase these hours. When there are plans for children to return to school, carers are sensitive to how difficult this may be for the child.

The safety of children

Risk assessments and children's care plans are generally good. Most of these documents provide carers with sufficient information to care for and protect children. However, some of these documents do not contain up-to-date information and are confusing. Where updates have been added, these are not dated, which provides a confusing narrative. Risk assessment documents are lengthy, detracting from the most significant risks children may experience. Children's views or input are not evidenced in plans. It is unclear whether children have sight of or are supported to understand the content of their plans if appropriate.

Carers do not always act to de-escalate incidents or to keep children safe. When children become angry, are thought to be at risk or act in a way that causes damage to property, staff do not always step in. During some incidents, carers have not exercised professional curiosity. Carers did not follow a child who left the home and was at risk, after. By failing to act, carers did not follow the child's plan. Management oversight of incidents and carers' actions has improved since the current manager has been in place.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

Since the last inspection, the registered manager has left the home. The new acting manager has applied to be registered by Ofsted. The manager and responsible individual acknowledge the need to improve practice in the home. They showed an ability to reflect on feedback and an awareness of the need to make changes that would benefit children and keep them safe.

Changes to practice are being made following the ending of one child's placement. A review has been carried out to determine what learning could be taken from the placement ending due to carers being unable to keep a child safe. New measures are now in place to strengthen decision-making in respect of deciding whether the home is right for a child. These measures are currently informal. However, the responsible individual reports that they will be embedded in company policy.

Children's progress is not tracked effectively. Where there is an identified need to carry out focused work with a child, carers talk to the child and record these conversations. Currently, there is no formal way for the manager to monitor this work and, therefore, a child's progress.

Carers receive regular reflective supervision. Records show that carers are supported to reflect on practice and what is going on for children. Records would be improved by detailing more comprehensive notes of the discussion. Carers report that supervision is beneficial and supports them to improve their practice.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
09/08/2022	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, 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 secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs. (Regulation 5 (a)(b)) In particular, challenge other organisations to ensure that children are provided with the required levels of education.	22 May 2023
The children's views, wishes and feelings standard is that children receive care from staff who— take their views, wishes and feelings into account in relation to matters affecting the children's care and welfare and their lives. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— ascertain and consider each child's views, wishes and feelings, and balance these against what they judge to be in the child's best interests when making decisions about the child's care and welfare; help each child to express views, wishes and feelings; help each child to understand how the child's views, wishes and feelings have been taken into account and give the child reasons for decisions in relation to the child; regularly consult children, and seek their feedback, about the quality of the home's care. (Regulation 7 (1)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))	22 May 2023

In particular, ensure that, when appropriate, children are aware of the content of their plans and are given the opportunity to have input into or an opinion on their plans. Children's views and whether they are aware of the content of their plans should be clearly documented in the plans.	
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; 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)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)) In particular, ensure that carers take appropriate action during incidents. In addition, ensure that staff are aware of and follow children's plans and risk assessments.	22 May 2023
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	22 May 2023

promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— 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. use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(f)(h)) In particular, ensure that children’s progress is monitored, that children’s plans are relevant and carers undertake necessary work with children.	
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 and— are kept up to date; and signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c)) In particular, ensure that all records, specifically risk assessments and plans, are clear and kept up to date. In addition, ensure that any updates to plans are signed and dated.	22 May 2023

Recommendation

- Staff should understand their important role in encouraging the child to reflect on and understand their history, according to their age and understanding. Staff should keep and encourage children to keep appropriate memorabilia of the time spent living at the home and help them record significant life events. In particular, carers should ensure that memory books are updated regularly and contain descriptions and dates of activities. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 62, paragraph 14.5)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2682000

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Blue Elephant Childcare Ltd

Registered provider address: Unit 30, Chivenor Business Park, Barnstaple EX31 4FT

Responsible individual: Lucy Squire

Manager: Kelly Roddis

Inspector

Carla Simkiss, Social Care Inspector

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