

2802317

Registered provider: Birchwood Independence Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is privately owned and provides care for one child who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

The child living in the home was present during the inspection and spoke with the inspector.

The home and manager registered with Ofsted in August 2024.

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 June 2026

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 21 January 2026

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/01/2026	Full	Requires improvement to be good
05/03/2025	Full	Good

Summary of findings

Staff have positive and trusting relationships with the child; they provide nurturing support and create a homely environment. Care is individualised, with progress seen in education and the child's developing independence. When the child goes missing from the home, staff make efforts to locate them and support their safe return. Staff help the child to understand risk through meaningful conversations. However, there are shortfalls in oversight by leaders and managers. On occasions, managers have delayed in reviewing incidents and responding to safeguarding concerns, and staff have not always had reflective debriefs to support their learning.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff are committed to providing stability to the child through building trusting relationships with them. They know the child well, and their interactions demonstrate warmth, nurture and positive relationships. Staff use playfulness to interact with the child, and the child responds well to this, appearing relaxed in staff's company.

Staff support the child to lead a healthy lifestyle. They encourage a healthy diet and provide opportunities such as gym membership and dog walks to improve physical fitness. The manager has made requests for the child to receive support for their emotional wellbeing; this is due to start in the summer.

Following a prolonged period out of formal education, the child has made progress by re-engaging with learning opportunities. Staff have supported the child to complete examinations for their CSCS card and to attend a weekly off-road motorcycle provision. Additionally, staff provide daily informal learning opportunities focused on independence skills through an ASDAN qualification. However, attendance and engagement are not yet consistent. Staff's communication with the current education provider requires further development to ensure a more coordinated approach to support the child's continued progress.

Staff support the child to maintain positive relationships with family and friends and advocate for arrangements that promote their identity. The child regularly spends time with friends, has sleepovers, and visits their family. One family member spoke positively about the care and support provided by the staff. Staff arrange for the child's dog to visit the home for sleepovers, which supports the child's sense of belonging, permanence and emotional wellbeing.

The home is warm, welcoming, and personalised to the child's needs. The child has new bedroom furniture and takes pride in keeping their room clean and tidy. Photos of the child are on display in the home, and staff celebrate achievements through framed certificates and memory books.

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

Staff have a good understanding of the child's lived experiences, vulnerabilities and associated risks. Staff adopt a strengths-based approach and support the child to take risks appropriate to their age and level of understanding. Managers skilfully balance known risk with the child's wish for increased independence. The manager works collaboratively with the child's wider professional network to regularly review strategies implemented to keep the child safe.

All risks associated with the child being missing are understood by staff. The staff have agreed strategies with the child, such as sharing their location and maintaining regular contact with staff. This helps to provide assurances of their safety when they spend time away from the home. When the child goes missing, staff make attempts to contact them and their family and friends, with the aim of locating the child and encouraging them to return home. When managers identify learning, plans are updated to reflect this. However, the plans do not always provide clear guidance for staff to follow, which means their responses are sometimes inconsistent.

When the child expressed their frustrations regarding a staff member's practice, managers listened to the child and recorded their concerns as a complaint. The manager communicated the outcome to the child, who recognised that their voice was heard. Managers also made changes to improve staff practice.

Staff respond appropriately to safeguard the child when they return home under the influence of substances. They talk to the child about the health risks and the potential legal implications of being in possession of drugs. The boundaries implemented by staff reinforce this message along with input from specialist services. As a result, there has been a reduction in these concerns.

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

There is a permanent and stable staff team caring for the child. This has supported the child to build positive relationships. Staff speak fondly about working in the home and the support they receive from management. The staff benefit from regular supervision sessions and team meetings. Staff receive robust training, which provides them with the knowledge and skills they need to care for the child. Some staff members have not achieved the required qualifications within the specified time frames, and the manager has revised their deadlines while monitoring their progress.

Management oversight has been inconsistent. On one occasion, there was a delay in the manager identifying and responding to an allegation made by the child. This shortfall was partly due to staff not following the correct safeguarding processes at the time of the incident. Once identified, the manager spoke with the child and investigated the allegation. The manager shared the outcome with relevant professionals.

Managers do not consistently review incidents, and comments do not always reflect staff actions or identify learning to inform improvements to the quality of care provided.

Additionally, staff have not always had the opportunity to discuss incidents, limiting their opportunities for personal reflection and learning.

The manager works collaboratively with professionals involved in the child's life and is a strong advocate for the child. For example, they have supported education professionals to understand the child's needs to ensure that the right support is identified. Professionals are complimentary about the care and support staff provide for the child, and they recognise the progress the child has made from their starting point.

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 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— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— feedback from the experiences of children, including complaints received; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(g)(ii)(h)) In particular, the manager should ensure that all staff understand safeguarding processes and their responsibilities in relation to sharing information in a timely manner. Managers should ensure that there are effective monitoring and review systems in place to improve their oversight, allowing for effective evaluation of the quality of care. Significant incidents should be reviewed in a timely manner and comment on staff practice. Any learning identified should inform care and support plans for children and provide clear guidance for staff.	31 July 2026

The registered manager should ensure that staff are provided with the opportunity for reflective conversations after incidents to support their learning and development.	
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Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that managers and staff improve communication with the child's education setting to address attendance concerns and support the child to sustain and build on the progress they have made. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.12)

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: 2802317

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: Kristian Russell

Inspector

Carly Parry, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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