

SC045096

Registered provider: Blackford Education (Schools) Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private company. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four children. The care packages usually include the provision of education at the company's school.

The manager is awaiting the outcome of their registration interview with Ofsted.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 23 January 2020, to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 2 to 3 November 2021

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	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 23 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: Sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: None

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/01/2020	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
24/04/2019	Full	Good
12/09/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good
25/10/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children in this home experience warm and loving care, and are held in high positive regard by their carers. The staff ensure that wherever possible this home replicates positive family life. On returning from school, each child is welcomed with a hug from members of staff, and the routine of homework, dinner preparation and attendance at after-school clubs begins.

Children's interests and hobbies are facilitated and encouraged. Each child attends clubs in the local community. Staff thoughtfully plan around this to make sure that the same staff member offers transport to and from the activity each week. This means that the children's living arrangements remain discrete and do not set them apart from their peers.

The staff have a comprehensive understanding of the children's needs. Staff work seamlessly together to ensure consistency and continuity of care for the children. Staff show continued commitment to supporting children through the challenges they face.

Staff work well with other professionals to meet the children's needs. Social workers told the inspector that the staff go 'above and beyond' in their care of the children.

Children's bedrooms are decorated to reflect their individual personalities and tastes. However, the shared areas of the home require further personalisation.

Children spoke with enthusiasm about all the activities they do in the home. During the COVID-19 pandemic a skate ramp has been erected in the garden, and using it is a popular pastime with all of the children. Days out and trips away are a regular occurrence at this home. Moments are captured and thoughtfully collected in personalised photo books for each of the children.

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

Staff are strong advocates for the children. The manager has achieved face-to-face medical appointments for a child who finds it easier to access information in person. Staff carefully follow the advice and guidance of the involved professionals, and work collaboratively to support children.

The staff's in-depth knowledge of each child helps them to foresee and mitigate any risks in order to keep children safe. When restraints are necessary, recording is thorough and children and staff are debriefed sensitively.. Staff reported that the manager will appropriately challenge and help staff reflect on the situation. This enables staff to consider whether there were alternative actions that could have been taken, and whether there is any learning to be taken away for future reference.

De-escalation techniques are used consistently and effectively by staff. However, children's case records do not accurately reflect practice in this area. There is currently no reduction plan around restraint for one child whose experience of restraint has increased recently. However, the staff are curious to understand the reasons behind this, and are looking for patterns and trends to identify possible triggers.

Staff support children to access therapeutic intervention. Staff adhere to the advice of the therapist to ensure that their practice complements the therapy being delivered and offers consistency to the children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager and senior leadership team have created a culture of support in the home for children and staff. Staff described managers as approachable and supportive. Staff receive regular supervision which offers appropriate challenge and support.

The manager has positive relationships with children's family members. Parents told the inspector that they feel comfortable calling the home to enquire about their children. Parents feel well informed about their children and spoke positively of the relationships they have with staff when they have visited. Parents feel confident that their children are kept safe and enjoy living in the home. One parent receives a monthly update on their child by audio clip, to ensure that the update is accessible to them.

Safer recruitment practices are in place. New staff members receive a thorough induction and ongoing support to ensure that they are able to fulfil their role effectively. Practice concerns are promptly addressed and additional support and guidance are offered, such as using group supervision and role play to explore how carers attune to children.

The manager is readily available to children and understands their needs well. The children often cited the manager as one of the adults they could talk to and liked being around.

Children's case records are written in first-person narrative from the child's perspective. However, it is not clear if children have viewed and agreed to what has been written using their voice. In addition, the direction from the manager is somewhat diluted when written in this way, and could be stronger.

The manager leads a strong staff team, and strives to provide a high standard of care for children.

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
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans; help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; and de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(xi)) In particular, ensure that the children's case records accurately reflect personalised de-escalation techniques for each child. In addition, ensure that a plan is developed to reduce the use of restraint.	4 February 2022

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. In particular, carefully consider the appropriateness of recording the child's information using first-person

narrative.('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

- The registered person should ensure that the home is personalised to the children, so as to provide a homely environment. This will provide a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. In particular, ensure that children's photographs and artwork are displayed around the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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: SC045096

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Blackford Education (Schools) Ltd

Registered provider address: Blackford House, Blackford, Minehead TA24 8SY

Responsible individual: Alan Wilkes

Registered manager: Kelly Field

Inspector

Katie Ratcliffe, Social Care Inspector

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