

SC372511

Registered provider: Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This local authority children's home provides short-break care for up to 5 children. The service provides care for children who may have learning difficulties or physical disabilities and other complex healthcare needs.

The manager registered with Ofsted in September 2015.

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 March 2026

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection, and care.

Date of last inspection: 26 February 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/02/2025	Full	Outstanding
28/02/2024	Full	Outstanding
06/12/2022	Full	Outstanding
30/11/2021	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children visit this vibrant and loving home where they quickly develop trusting relationships with skilled and dedicated staff. Feedback from children is positive. Children offered a 'thumbs up', smiles and circled smiley faces when asked about their experience of their short breaks. Staff know the children very well and provide exceptionally high levels of nurture and individualised care. Staff anticipate and respond to the children's every need.

The progress of children is exceptional. There is significant evidence of change and improvement because of the excellent quality of care provided. Every success is recognised and celebrated, and each child's ability is cherished and respected. One child is now walking and dancing with staff support and other children are developing their independence skills. The home is filled with love, laughter, and happiness. There are colourful 'achievement stars' and children's artwork on display around the home.

Children enjoy accessing their short break and are happy. Staff do not allow the complex needs of the children to define them. Regardless of their ability, staff enable children to enjoy new experiences such as kayaking, ziplining and swimming. Children also regularly access local parks and enjoy going shopping and baking with staff and their peers. These successes are captured in bright and colourful memory books.

The experience of accessing this home enhances the lives of children. When children are new to the home, staff ensure that they are fully informed and risks are well understood and quickly reduce. The individual communication needs of children are fully understood and reflected in clear plans and assessments.

Short breaks take place following a comprehensive assessment of the children's needs. This assessment is informed by discussions with the relevant people including families, school, and case workers. Children meet the staff before visits take place to ensure that overnight stays are in their best interest. Children are fully supported by thorough in-depth assessments. Transitions into and out of the home are welcoming, thoughtful, and kind.

Families deeply appreciate the staff, their warmth, and their friendly and supportive care. Families without exception said that the quality of care is excellent and that their children are gaining experiences and opportunities that they are unable to provide. Families said the provision is a 'blessing' and staff are 'amazing', 'caring', 'brilliant' and 'excellent communicators'. Information provided to families about what their child has enjoyed and achieved during their stay is comprehensive and informative. Families feel included and fully informed, including when changes are made to their child's short break.

The home offers a warm and welcoming place for children to stay and play. There is extensive investment in play equipment that is accessible to children of all abilities.

Children benefit from playhouses, adapted bicycles, and a wide range of indoor and outdoor toys. Staff assess and respond to the children's likes and dislikes and have been able to support families with ideas for games and toys, so the progress of children continues at home.

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

Highly skilled practice by staff results in sustained improvement to children's lives. A professionally curious approach ensures that managers and staff quickly recognise and respond if children and families are struggling. This is achieved through exceptionally strong relationships and collaboration between the agencies involved with the children and their families. The manager promotes a 'family first' approach that significantly minimises risks to children.

Children in this home are safe. Staff fully understand their safeguarding responsibilities and any concerns are sensitively explored and professionally managed. Excellent communication with schools, children's services, and health professionals, further enhances the safety and quality of care that children receive. Regular multi-disciplinary reviews are carried out, and clear and directive risk assessments and care plans are in place.

Children's stays are well planned. Families are contacted each month and before every short break to discuss any concerns or changes to their children's health or wellbeing needs. Children have a 'keeping me safe and well' plan. This pictorial plan describes the children's needs, including their communication needs, and a description of their presentation when experiencing different feelings, including pain or discomfort. This helps staff tailor their approach and support for the child. In addition, effective risk assessments for activities, fire evacuation and moving and handling are in place.

Children are protected from distress, difficult situations and bullying through the continual review and assessment of their needs, likes, and dislikes. When similar interests and friendships start to form between children, these are quickly recognised and encourage.

The arrangements that are in place for the storage, administration, and management of a wide range of medicines are effective. The management of complex medication regimes is highly professional, well understood and well managed. Staff ensure that children receive swift medical intervention and support when required, in line with their plans. There are strong links with health professionals that promotes the continued health of the children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager is an asset to this home. He is highly ambitious for the children and influential in changing the lives of those in his care. He is an inspiration to his team and an excellent role model. The manager is supported by a competent and caring deputy. This ensures continuity of care and support to children, families, and staff.

Feedback from professionals is excellent. Professionals highly value the manager as a leader of high-quality care across the wider system. Professionals said there is excellent communication across the team. The manager was described as 'amazing' as they demonstrate a continued commitment to children.

Relationships between managers, staff and children's families are exceptional. Staff make themselves available to families at any time, day, or night. There is unwavering confidence from families in the manager and staff. Families feel invested in the home and are assured their children are safe and happy. This is fostered by excellent communication, contact, and support. One parent said, 'I have no one to help, the manager is always there for me.'

Leaders and managers create a culture of high aspiration and positivity. They have high expectations of their staff. Staff describe the manager as leading and modelling very high standards. The manager's leadership consistently encourages staff development and is exceptionally supportive.

The manager is not afraid to challenge poor practice. Bespoke training that meets the needs of complex children is sourced, attended, and understood by staff. This ensures that a high standard of practice prevails amongst dedicated and skilled staff. Regular in-depth staff meetings demonstrate a strong commitment to children, continuous improvement, and reflective practice. Discussions about children are conducted with care, compassion, and sensitivity.

The manager and staff have an in-depth knowledge of the children in their care. Research-informed practice, continues to develop from a strong and confident leadership base. The manager and staff demonstrate professional curiosity as to how they can use and implement research to improve the lives of children. Children continue to flourish with the support of staff.

The physical environment for children is safe and secure. The home is maintained to a very high standard and supports the accessibility needs of children.

Some children have stayed for longer periods of time and beyond 17 days. While it is acknowledged managers are making decisions in the best interests of children in what are difficult situations, this cannot continue under the home's current conditions of registration.

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
In the circumstances set out in paragraph (2), these Regulations apply in relation to a child with the modifications set out in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 5. The circumstances are that— the child is placed in a series of short-term placements within children's homes ("short breaks"), and— no single placement is intended to last for more than 17 days. (Regulation 52(1)(2)(b)(i))	31 August 2026

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: SC372511

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Registered provider address: Town Hall, King William Street, Blackburn BB1 7DY

Responsible individual: Tracy Lysons

Registered manager: Jeremy Wood

Inspector

Jo Cansfield, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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