

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 five 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: 26 and 27 February 2025

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: 28 February 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/02/2024	Full	Outstanding
06/12/2022	Full	Outstanding
30/11/2021	Full	Outstanding
26/02/2020	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children are exceptionally well cared for. They form strong and positive relationships with staff and feel safe and secure. Staff treat children with dignity and respect. Staff spoken to during the inspection spoke fondly and with pride about the children that they support.

Children have lots of different ways to have their views, wishes and feelings heard. Staff actively seek children's views and input in all aspects of their care. Staff encourage children to express their individual identities. One parent described the staff team as 'incredible' and said that 'they really understand my child as an individual'.

Staff support children to communicate using their preferred communication methods. Staff encourage children to enhance and develop their communication. Staff also respect the fact that some children prefer to express their views, wishes and feelings in a way that works best for them. One child, who used the service for a short amount of time, was able to use verbal communication for the first time following some intensive input from staff. This has benefited the child greatly in their move to a more permanent home and for their future.

Staff make sure that they provide children with opportunities that expand their life experiences. Staff support children to experience a wide range of stimulating and age-appropriate activities to meet their sensory needs and that complement their hobbies and interests. These activities take place in the home and in the community. This means that children can access experiences that they may not otherwise be able to. They benefit greatly from spending time at the home and have fun while they stay there.

Children are supported and encouraged to enhance and develop their independence skills and life skills in line with their age, ability and understanding. As a result, some children have adopted these skills into their day-to-day lives as part of their own routines, which has helped to prepare them for moving into adulthood.

Although children do not live permanently at the home, staff support children's education during their stay. Staff actively take part in reviews and are fully aware of the educational needs of each child. They work with schools to ensure that communication aids and support strategies used are consistent across both settings.

Children benefit from well-planned stays. There is robust planning in place to help and prepare children who are new to the home. Information is reviewed to ensure that the staff can meet the child's needs, and that staff have the suitable training and skills needed.

Children are made to feel welcome, with the best possible planning that considers the children's individual circumstances. This ensures that children are gaining confidence in their new surroundings and building positive relationships.

One child remained in the home over the agreed limit for short-break arrangements. However, the manager and staff were proactive and supportive in working with external professionals to identify a suitable permanent placement and to support the child with a successful transition to their new home. All decisions made around the length of the child's stay were carefully considered to ensure they were in the best interest of the child.

The manager and staff are committed to working together with parents, placing authorities, specialist health advisers and school professionals. They attend children's meetings and reviews. These positive and effective working relationships make sure that children consistently receive a high level of exceptional care, and support children to make progress in line with their individual targets.

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

Children are safe and feel safe while staying at the home. There have been no allegations, disclosures or safeguarding concerns since the last inspection. Staff are trained in relevant safeguarding topics. They know and understand the processes they would follow should they be made aware of any concerns or allegations.

Each child's individual risks are detailed in their care plans and risk management plans. These are robust documents which are frequently reviewed and updated and give clear information, guidance and strategies to staff to ensure consistent responses to children's behaviours. Staff understand these documents and put the guidance into practice.

Staff know the children well and can quickly identify if a child is unhappy or upset. Staff use strategies detailed in children's plans alongside their relationships with children to comfort and reassure them.

Children receive high levels of close care, support and supervision from staff. Due to the positive relationships between staff and children and the effectiveness of support strategies, there have been no occasions when it has been necessary to physically hold a child to keep them safe. However, all staff are suitably trained in this, should it be necessary.

The physical environment for children is safe and secure and protects them from harm. There are photos throughout the home showing the fun activities children take part in. Children's memories are captured in these photos and this helps children feel a sense of belonging when staying there. The use of specialist equipment makes sure that all areas of the home are inclusive for all children who stay at the home.

Children who stay at the home have a wide variety of complex needs. Staff have the appropriate skills and experience to support children's individual needs. When needed,

external support is sought to provide staff with training specific to the children's personalised needs. Core staff and casual staff all receive the same high level of training.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

There is an experienced manager who is supported by a deputy manager. They are positive role models for children and the team. Staff spoken to describe the management team as available, approachable and always willing to offer support and guidance.

Leaders and managers know children well and have an ambitious vision for what children can achieve. The manager has successfully created a culture in which staff aspire to improve the lives of the children who access the service and always place the needs of children at the heart of their practice.

The manager understands the team's strengths and has systems in place to quickly identify and respond to any areas for improvement. He is constantly looking for ways to improve the home and provide new opportunities for the children. Staff strive to understand the children they care for. Staff use a range of research to inform and improve their practice, including zones of regulation and regarding specific health conditions.

There is a positive ethos within the home. Staff have clear roles and responsibilities and have a shared sense of ownership and accountability. They work well as a team and managers lead by example.

Children are extremely well cared for by a consistent and stable workforce that is suitably trained and qualified. The team is complemented by a team of casual staff who are equally as invested in the home and children. As a team, staff provide kindness and nurture to children in addition to supporting children to flourish and develop.

Staff are supported through regular supervision sessions and personal plans that assess their professional development, ensuring that staff practice continues to thrive. In addition to these sessions, team meetings are well attended and staff understand their value. The meetings are used to share information with the team about children and about organisational matters. They are also used as a reflective space for staff. The focus of the meetings is to support improvement and development of the team and the care provided to children.

Effective relationships with families are firmly in place. Feedback is actively encouraged from families and professionals. Social workers spoken to were extremely complimentary about the care provided. One parent said, '[Child's name] has done so much better than we expected, and that's because of the skills and warmth of the staff team.'

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

Statutory requirement

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 registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. The registered person must ensure that the home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose. (Regulation 16 (1) (5)) Specifically, that the registered manager must ensure that no single placement is intended to last for more than 17 days.	4 April 2025

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: Blackburn With Darwen Borough Council, Town Hall,
King William Street, Blackburn BB1 7DY

Responsible individual: Tracy Lysons

Registered manager: Jeremy Wood

Inspectors

Katie Tomlinson, Social Care Inspector
Aislinn Cooper, Social Care Inspector

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