

SC397344

Registered provider: Birtenshaw

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is operated by a private organisation and provides care for up to four children who may have physical disabilities and/or learning disabilities. At the time of the inspection, there were two children living in the home, and one child had recently moved out.

The registered manager has formally requested the cancellation of their registration and was not present at the time of the inspection. An interim manager has assumed the role since September 2023 but has not yet completed the registration process with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 October 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

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

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

Date of last inspection: 24 May 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/05/2022	Full	Good
26/01/2022	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
13/09/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
27/01/2020	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children live in a spacious and warm environment. The home is furnished to a high standard with bright, tasteful decor. Children choose how they want to decorate and personalise their bedrooms.

Staff support children to enjoy a range of activities, which they capture through pictures and photo album. The children visit local parks, spend time in the home doing arts and crafts and go on trips to the beach and sensory facilities. This means that children have fun and build a sense of belonging with one another.

Children are reliant on staff to understand their needs. They develop warm and trusting relationships with the staff, who are attentive and skilled in understanding what children are expressing.

Staff spend good-quality time with children on a one-to-one basis. As a result, children are making progress with their independence skills. They are learning skills in dressing themselves, accessing public transport and understanding road safety. Children's wishes and feelings are heard, captured and acted on.

Managers and staff provide good support to young people moving out of the home. They use a well-planned, collaborative approach tailored to each young person's needs. This includes focusing on skill development, continuity of care and emotional support to empower them to be as independent as possible in their adulthood. These strategies help to ensure long-term success..

Staff help children to spend time with people who are important to them. The manager advocates for children and supports increased time spent with loved ones. In addition, staff support children to spend time with friends when it is appropriate to do so. This ensures that children maintain important relationships.

Managers and staff regularly take part in children's review meetings. They work hard to develop good partnership links. The manager has requested up-to-date copies of all the children's education, health and care plans. However, the manager has not continued to escalate her request for this information. As a result, staff are not fully informed of all the additional support required for each child.

Restrictions are in place, including the locking of front and back doors to prevent children from leaving without adult support. These measures are based on comprehensive assessments of each child's unique needs and are carefully documented. However, the manager has not regularly reviewed these assessments to consider their continued relevance and effectiveness in ensuring the safety of the children.

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

The adults have a thorough knowledge of the risks in the children's lives. Detailed strategies are in place to support children to keep themselves and others safe. The strategies are tailored to meet the needs of individual children. This approach reduces the risks in children's lives and helps them when they are struggling with their emotions.

The manager has changed the medication procedures to ensure that a specific, skilled team manages medication. This change has resulted in no medication errors, and children receiving their prescribed medication in line with medical advice. This has a direct and positive impact on children's daily lives and ensures that they are safely receiving the correct medication.

Staff work collaboratively with other professionals, parents and carers, and family members to understand children's complex needs so that they can keep children safe. Managers and staff are strong advocates for children. Leaders have taken suitable action to investigate any allegations to the satisfaction of the placing authority. Staff communicate well with relevant professionals to provide an all-round approach to children's care.

Children are cared for by a committed and enthusiastic staff team. Staff are suitably qualified or are either enrolled or about to enrol on the relevant training following their probationary period. Staff are trained and receive ongoing, mandatory training and relevant, focused training online to enable them to keep children safe.

Positive behaviour is well promoted, and staff show care and understanding in their responses when children are distressed or upset. Staff use a wide range of de-escalation techniques. Since the previous inspection, low-level holds have been used as a last resort to keep children safe. However, on occasion, children are not given the opportunity to debrief in a way that is appropriate to their communication needs.

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

The interim manager is experienced and is supported by her staff team. The manager is in the process of applying to register with Ofsted and has worked incredibly hard to build positive relationships with the children, staff team, parents and relevant professionals. The staff welcome her leadership and the change and challenge that this brings.

Two of the four requirements made at the previous inspection have not been met. The previous manager has not notified Ofsted of all serious incidents in line with regulation, reducing the oversight of the regulator. In addition, staff have not always recorded incidents without delay. The newly promoted manager understands the strengths and areas for improvement. They have implemented systems to improve their oversight through regular auditing and evaluation. This is improving practice in several areas and means that staff provide better care for children.

There have been some changes in the staff team. The staff team is now consistent and stable. When there have been vacancies, these have been covered by the existing staff team or staff known to children from the agency. Staff say that the manager is approachable and that they feel valued.

The manager has a good understanding of the progress children make. She spends time with children on a regular basis, which helps to measure their progress. Additionally, the manager completes a regular review of care to highlight children's progress and to evaluate children's care.

The manager shares information with other people who are important in the children's lives. One social worker said, 'The new manager is great – her top priority are the children [and] she keeps me informed about [name of child's] progress and areas the staff are supporting him with. [Name of child] has made so much progress.'

Team meetings are used as a forum for learning. The manager is not afraid to challenge and address staff practice. This helps staff to reflect on their performance and to identify areas for improvement. Staff receive regular, reflective supervision, and these discussions support future developments.

Managers conduct annual appraisals with staff, during which staff members reflect on their work and establish targets for the upcoming year. However, these appraisals do not take into account the perspectives of children or other essential individuals. This could limit the manager's understanding of the children's experiences.

Staff feel well supported in their roles. They say that there is effective communication. One staff member said, 'I love my job working with the children.' Another staff member said, 'The support system from the team and manager is second to none.'

Some children require assistive equipment, such as car and walking harnesses, to support them in the community. All agencies are in agreement with the plans. However, managers have not ensured that the use of such equipment is reviewed to ensure that it remains necessary for the child.

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 registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the name of the child; details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)) Specifically, ensure that all incidents of physical intervention are recorded in full and that a record of these is kept in the child's file in the home in a timely way. This requirement was made at the previous inspection and is restated.	20 November 2023

The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there. (Regulation 40 (4)(c)) This specifically relates to ensuring that the registered person informs Ofsted of any serious incidents and allegations made in the home and that notifications to Ofsted are provided without delay. This requirement was made at the previous inspection and is restated.	20 November 2023
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that decisions around having locks on the home's front and back doors are informed by a rigorous assessment of that individual child's needs, are properly recorded and are kept under regular review. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10)
- The registered person should ensure that a child's education, health and care plan is on file and contains detail about planned and agreed approaches to restraint or restraint techniques to be applied in the day-to-day routine of the child to support the child's complex needs due to their disability, and is on the child's file in the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 47, paragraph 9.43)
- The registered person should ensure appraisals for staff include the views of other professionals who have worked with staff over the year, and the views of children. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.5)

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: SC397344

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Birtenshaw

Registered provider address: Birtenshaw Darwen Road, Bromley Cross, Bolton
BL7 9AB

Responsible individual: David Reid

Registered manager: Adam Healy

Inspector

Jennifer Quest, Social Care Inspector

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