

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 that provides care for up to four children who may have physical disabilities, learning disabilities and/or sensory impairment. At the time of the inspection, there were four children living in the home.

The manager assumed the role September 2023 and has applied to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 September 2024

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: 10 October 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/10/2023	Full	Good
24/05/2022	Full	Good
26/01/2022	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
13/09/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are well supported when moving into the home. Since the last inspection, two children have been supported to move in. The manager and placing authority have worked together to ensure that the children have had their wishes considered in order to identify the best support for them.

Children benefit from imaginative, sensory-based activities. Staff are resourceful and creative. They actively seek opportunities for children to engage in important childhood activities, such as becoming confident on play equipment, playing games and sensory play.

There are photos of children around the home showing them engaged in different experiences. Children also have memory books that capture their time from when they moved into the home up until when they leave. This helps to provide children with good memories of their time spent in the home.

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.

Staff understand each child's unique methods of communication and are attuned to the children's communication styles. Children who are non-verbal will use different vocal noises, directing staff to items of choice. Staff are sensitive to each child's facial cues and gestures and use these to help the child to make choices in their daily life.

The manager ensures that children's care plans are up to date and appropriate for each child. Staff support children with their emotional well-being. Clear plans help to guide staff on how to care for children when they feel upset, worried or anxious. Staff are able to quickly identify when something is not right for a child.

Children are engaged in full-time education and have all made progress. The staff and managers work very closely with education colleagues. However, one child's education, health and care plan was not on file. This means that staff may not have access to all the information required to support the child and may not fully understand the areas to help the child work on and strengthen.

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

Feedback from children's families and professionals is positive. They say that children are settled and well cared for. One family member said, 'A strength of the service is all of the staff know the children really well, they know when they are upset and know how best to support them.'

Staff respond effectively to behaviours that challenge, demonstrating a commitment to finding innovative ways to help children manage difficult situations. This approach reduces children's anxieties and minimises incidents.

Staff only hold children as a last resort so as to ensure safety, and they spend time with children to help them understand their behaviour and prevent reoccurrence. However, in the absence of the manager, incident records reviewed by covering managers have lacked reflection, and this was not addressed on the manager's return. This limits the development of new supportive strategies and the team's ability to implement improvement to prevent further incidents.

Restrictions are in place at the children's home, including the locking of front and back doors to prevent children from leaving and encountering potential harm. These measures are based on comprehensive assessments of each child's unique needs and are carefully documented. The manager also conducts regular reviews of these assessments to consider their continued relevance and effectiveness in ensuring the safety of the children.

Staff work collaboratively with other professionals, parents and family members to understand children's complex needs. Managers and staff are strong advocates for children. The manager communicates well with relevant professionals to provide an all-round approach to children's care.

Safeguarding practice is effective. Staff receive safeguarding training that is specific to children's disabilities. Additionally, staff have a clear understanding of children's needs, vulnerabilities and the potential risks they may be exposed to. Staff understand how to report and respond to any safeguarding concerns.

On the whole, medication practices are safe. However, during the inspection, staff did not shake an over-the-counter medication as per guidance and did not document the mistake. The manager took proactive steps to address this issue during the inspection and advised that staff would receive additional training and support as needed. These measures will support learning and help prevent future errors.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is experienced and is supported by her staff team. The manager has applied 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.

Children are cared for by a committed and enthusiastic staff team. Staff are either suitably qualified or enrolled on the relevant qualification. Staff are trained and receive ongoing training to help them meet the children's needs.

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 an agency. Staff say that the manager is approachable and that they feel valued.

Permanent staff receive regular reflective supervision. However, agency staff do not, which is not in line with the provider's policy. As a result, agency staff lack protected time to reflect on their work with the children.

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.

The manager and staff have worked diligently to ensure that children feel welcomed and supported according to their individual needs. They demonstrate unwavering dedication, refusing to give up on any child. A learning disability nurse remarked, '[Name of child] has experienced numerous placement breakdowns, but the staff's attitude of care, compassion and positivity has helped him feel a sense of belonging. We have never seen him so settled.'

Leaders and managers respond promptly to complaints and make improvements based on the outcomes of investigations. They also use internal and independent monitoring on a monthly basis to enhance practice and the care and support provided to children. One staff member, who is particularly skilled in quality assurance, has developed useful aids to help improve the accuracy of daily activity records. She is actively sharing these tools with colleagues to support and strengthen their recording practices.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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— a description of the measure and its duration; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(iv)(c)) In particular, leaders and managers must ensure that accurate records are made of all incidents of restraint in the home. Furthermore, records must be evaluated with scrutiny, considering any potential learning outcomes that can be incorporated into children's risk management plans or used to support staff development. This includes ensuring that records demonstrate that all involved staff have been consulted about the measures used and are appropriately trained.	20 October 2024
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must ensure that staff— seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans; seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs; if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans; and	20 October 2024

seek to develop and maintain effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children's home is to provide care and accommodation.

(Regulation 5 (a)(b)(c)(d))

Leaders and managers need to ensure that partners share children's relevant plans, if plans are not shared in a timely way, the registered manager needs to escalate to ensure that the relevant information about a child is received.

Recommendations

- The registered person should have systems in place to ensure that all staff, receive supervision of their practice which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- The registered person should ensure that all staff administer medication in line with the guidance included with it. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 35, paragraph 7.15)

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: Sarah Small

Inspector

Jennifer Quest, Social Care Inspector

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