

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 4 children who may have physical disabilities, learning disabilities and/or sensory impairment. At the time of the inspection, there were 3 children and one young person living in the home. Inspectors spent time with 2 of the children.

The manager registered with Ofsted in September 2024.

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 March 2026

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 September 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/09/2024	Full	Good
10/10/2023	Full	Good
24/05/2022	Full	Good
26/01/2022	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff are committed to children and young people and provide stability. This is particularly important for those who have experienced multiple placement breakdowns previously. As a result, children and young people are now settled and happy. Staff make time to get to know each child well, building trusting relationships that help them feel safe and secure. This nurturing approach enables children and young people to make progress.

Moves in and out of the home are well planned and carefully managed. The manager ensures that any move is based on a thorough assessment of children's needs and that the arrangements are suitable. Time is taken to allow children to visit the home, to meet the staff who will be looking after them and other children they will be living with. Moves take place at a pace that suits the individual, helping to reduce anxiety.

All children and young people attend school regularly and receive good support with their learning. They are expected to achieve some NVQ qualifications. School also places a strong emphasis on developing independence and life skills. This is supported in the home, where children are encouraged to practise practical tasks. For example, one child was seen baking. Staff focus on children and young people's strengths and what they can do, promoting as much independence possible.

Children and young people benefit from a wide range of activities both in and out of the home. The manager is creative in finding opportunities that broaden children's experiences and support their social development. For example, arrangements are being made to hire a local cinema so that all children and young people, including those from other homes within the organisation, can enjoy a film together in a supportive environment.

Children and young people are treated with dignity and respect. Care is tailored to their individual needs, and staff have a clear understanding of the challenges children and young people experience, such as difficulties with change, transitions or meeting new people. These situations are managed sensitively to minimise anxiety and ensure children and young people feel supported.

Children and young people are helped to have positive relationships with the people who are important to them. Family members are welcomed into the home, and family time is arranged in a way that feels natural and enjoyable. Families speak positively about the support they have from staff and the manager, and value their visits. One parent said, 'from the point you enter the door it feels like a home and that is what you want for your children'.

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

Children and young people are supported to express their views, wishes and choices in a range of meaningful ways. Staff have a good understanding of how each child and young person communicates. Established systems of signing, pictures, symbols, gestures and facial expressions enable children and young people to communicate effectively, regardless of whether they use words. This ensures children and young people have a genuine voice in their daily lives.

Children and young people's complex needs, arising from their diagnosed conditions and learning disability, are well understood by staff. They recognise the nuances in each child and young person's behaviour, enabling them to interpret what children are trying to express. This helps children and young people feel understood and reduces frustration.

Behaviour is supported through positive strategies such as modelling, gentle reminders, offering time and space, and using a change of face when needed. When children and young people become distressed, staff use personalised calming techniques that are effective in managing situations most of the time. Strategies like holds are only used as a last resort. The manager provides good oversight, reviewing all incidents to ensure the way children and young people are helped is appropriate and to support staff reflection and learning.

Medication is managed safely and robustly. This is essential given the children and young people's health needs. Clear processes ensure that children and young people receive the correct medication at the right time. There have been no medication errors since the last inspection, showing the effectiveness of the systems in place.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is ambitious for children and young people. She has a good understanding of their individual needs and makes sure these are met to a good standard. She advocates effectively on behalf of children and young people when decisions do not reflect their best interests, ensuring their welfare remains central to all planning. For example, she has challenged adult services for a young person when the proposed adult home would not meet their needs. Therefore, another was identified. This makes sure children and young people have the care they deserve.

The manager has created a warm, positive culture in the home, which is mirrored by the staff team. Staff feel well supported and are confident in seeking guidance from the manager. They are committed to delivering good-quality care to help children and young people. Staff benefit from the manager's expectations and her knowledgeable approach. They speak positively about working in the home and take pride in providing a family-style environment where children and young people can grow, develop and enjoy positive experiences.

Staff development is helped through training, team meetings and regular supervision. Appraisals are taking place; however, the current format used does not allow staff to

contribute their views before meetings impacting on their involvement in the process. This also limits opportunities for staff to evaluate themselves and reflect on achievements.

There is a large staff team due to the level of support the children and young people require. There are staff vacancies, including the deputy manager and senior roles. These gaps are currently covered by established bank staff and other permanent team members. This ensures consistency of care for the children and young people. However, the vacancies should be addressed to ensure the manager has the appropriate staffing to sustain good practice in the long term.

There are some minor shortfalls in the documentation. In some documents staff write to the children and young people. However, in some places professional language is used which is not helpful to the child. Also, for one child, the Local Authority has yet to send a letter confirming there are no changes to their Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP). Although the manager has escalated this issue, she has not been successful in resolving it.

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

Recommendations

- As outlined in 10.1, the registered person should plan staffing levels to ensure that they meet the needs of children and can respond flexibly to unexpected events or opportunities. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.15)
- All staff must have their performance and fitness to carry out their role formally appraised at least once annually. This appraisal should take into account, where reasonable and practical, the views of other professionals who have worked with the staff member over the year and children in the home's care. As part of the performance management process, poor performance should be addressed by a timely plan to bring about improvement. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.5)
- The registered person should ensure that information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to them. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- Where the placing authority or another relevant person does not provide the input and services needed to meet a child's needs during their time in the home or in preparation for leaving the home, the home must challenge them to meet the child's needs (see regulations 5(c)). ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 12, paragraph 2.8)

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

Inspectors

Miriam Dolman, Social Care Inspector (lead)
Mark Green, Social Care Inspector

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