

1232380

Registered provider: Birtenshaw

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is part of a charitable organisation. The home provides short breaks for up to six children with social and emotional difficulties and/or physical disabilities and/or learning disabilities.

There is currently no registered manager in post.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

We last visited the home on 4 March 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 2 to 3 March 2022

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: 23 September 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/09/2019	Full	Good
14/08/2018	Full	Good
24/08/2017	Full	Good
07/03/2017	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children benefit from the time they spend at this home. Visits are well planned and structured in a way that focuses on each child's individual needs. Staff provide children with well-thought-out routines that are designed to provide a level of predictability. As a result, children settle quickly and get the maximum benefit from their stay.

Strong, trusting relationships exist between children and staff. During the inspection, there was a pleasant buzz about the home, with staff and children laughing and playing.

Activities are planned in a way that supports children to learn through fun. For example, using meal planning and cooking helps children make healthy food choices and broaden their diet. This is a strong characteristic of this service, one that is recognised by parents and professionals. A parent said: '[Name of child] likes going there and always comes home happy. They have done a lot of work on his diet, and he has lost loads of weight.'

Children's health needs are understood and supported effectively by staff. Systems are in place to ensure that medication is brought into and taken out of the home in a safe way. Regular audits ensure that there is an accurate record of the medication stock at all times.

Staff use a range of methods to enable children to have their say. During the inspection, staff were seen using visual prompts, emojis and picture communication symbols to enable children to express their feelings and make choices about their stay.

Feedback from parents and professionals is consistently positive about the care, safety and support given to their children. Parents spoke about how children had missed visiting the home during the pandemic and how much they looked forward to their short breaks. However, a lack of continuity caused by management and staff changes has resulted in some parents and social workers feeling that they are not kept informed about their child's experiences and progress.

The home is being redecorated throughout. At the time of the inspection, one floor had been completed. Staff were in the process of softening communal areas and corridors using decals, soft furnishings, books and toys. The home is on the same site as the organisation's college provision. Children accessing short breaks can access a range of recreational facilities, for example a gym, playground, trampoline and a smallholding with alpacas and hens.

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

High levels of staff supervision and support help keep children safe. Each child's individual risks and vulnerabilities are understood by staff who take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. Risk management strategies are discussed and agreed with parents and social workers who are confident that children are safe when visiting the home. A social worker said: 'Changes have impacted on a lot of things, but I am not concerned about [name of child]'s safety or care.'

Children develop good relationships with staff. Factors such as who the child likes and responds to, as well as skills and personalities, are considered in advance of each child's visit. This, combined with individualised routines, means that children get the best support possible. A child said, 'I like my staff, they are my friend.'

Staff recognise changes in mood and take action to reassure children and reduce their anxiety and frustration. When possible, staff support children to reflect, understand and better manage their emotions. This positive and proactive approach means the need for physical restraint is infrequent. On the occasions that restraint has been used, it has been used in a sensitive and caring manner, using the lowest level of intervention possible for the shortest period. A social worker said: '[Name of child] had a lot of restraints at his last short breaks placement but these have reduced significantly since he has been here. He is much happier.'

Organisational procedures have been followed in response to three allegations. Managers have shared information with the organisation's designated officer who takes responsibility for making referrals to external agencies. However, as at the previous inspection, in-house records were incomplete and did not provide essential information, such as strategy meeting minutes or the outcome of any investigation. This information was acquired from elsewhere in the organisation.

One complaint about the home has been made since Ofsted last visited. Evidence presented by the manager showed that the issue had been addressed to the satisfaction of the parent who made the complaint. However, no record had been made of the complaint or the steps taken by the previous manager.

Safer recruitment processes are in place. The manager is keen to ensure that vacancies within the team are filled by staff with the right personal qualities, skills and values to work with vulnerable children.

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

The home has not had a registered manager since December 2020. Two managers have been appointed but have left the organisation before registering with Ofsted. The current manager has been in post since October 2021. He is experienced, qualified and in the process of submitting his application to register.

Staffing has presented a significant challenge. Redeployment of staff to elsewhere in the organisation has meant that a reduced short-breaks service has been offered throughout the pandemic. This continues to be the case at this inspection.

When the home has been open, children have been supported by a small core team of staff, largely supplemented by agency and staff from other parts of the organisation. The manager has started to develop a more permanent team with plans to increase the service offer as more permanent staff are identified.

There is no evidence that staff received practice-related supervision before January 2022. Consistency has been undermined by the movement of staff and changes in management. The current manager has taken steps to address this by offering all staff at least one good-quality supervision. He is in the process of completing performance appraisals but has yet to develop a system where the views of children and professionals can be included in this process.

Managers have not ensured that staff meet the organisation's mandatory training requirements. For example, several staff have not completed or refreshed training in autism awareness, an important need of many children accessing the service. Similarly, staff have not received needs-led training in areas such as working with children who self-injure or children who exhibit symptoms of pica.

The manager is starting to make good use of internal quality assurance processes to identify and address areas for improvement. Monthly visits from the independent visitor significantly strengthen these processes. The manager recognises the need to improve response times when addressing shortfalls that arise from the independent visitor's reviews.

The manager has reviewed and updated important documents such as care plans, behaviour support plans and risk assessments. These documents are detailed and provide a good picture of each child's needs and strategies of support. However, key documents such as education, care and health plans and personal education plans were either missing or out of date.

The home's statement of purpose has been updated to reflect changes in management and staffing. However, the updated document has not been sent to Ofsted.

Suitable action has been taken to address the two recommendations from the previous inspection. However, the requirements relating to staff supervision and records of allegation management remain outstanding.

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 Home Regulations, including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The registered person must—</p> <p>notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (3)(b))</p>	7 April 2022
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b))</p> <p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</p>	7 April 2022
<p>The registered person must prepare and implement a policy which—</p> <p>provides for records to be kept of an allegation of abuse or neglect, and the action taken in response. (Regulation 34 (2)(d))</p> <p>Specifically, ensure that the home's records are organised and include a full account of what action was taken and the outcome of any allegation.</p> <p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</p>	7 April 2022
<p>The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which—</p> <p>include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child;</p> <p>are kept up to date. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b))</p>	7 April 2022

The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation.
(Regulation 39 (3))

7 April 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should, after consulting with parents and social workers, establish formal processes for keeping parents and social workers informed about their child when accessing short breaks. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 11, paragraph 2.3)
- The registered should ensure that timely action is taken to address any shortfalls that are identified following the independent visitor's reviews. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- The registered person should ensure that staff complete any outstanding mandatory training as well as training in working with children who self-injure and children who exhibit symptoms of pica. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)
- The registered should ensure that wherever possible, the views of children and professionals are considered as part of staff appraisals. ('Guide to the Children's Home 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 Home Regulations, including the quality standards'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1232380

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Birtenshaw

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

Responsible individual: Julie Barnes

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Paul Scott, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

© Crown copyright 2022