

1233310

Registered provider: Birtenshaw

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is part of a large charitable organisation. It offers care for up to three children who may have been diagnosed with a learning disability.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since May 2020.

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 July 2022

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: 11 January 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/01/2022	Full	Good
16/04/2019	Full	Good
23/01/2019	Full	Good
31/01/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Three children have lived at the home for several years. They are settled and happy, and they regard this as their home. A parent said, 'This is the right placement for [name of child]. I am happy with how he is cared for and know that he is safe and happy. He is always happy to go back after visiting me.'

Children benefit from individualised support that is responsive to their known and emerging needs. Well-thought-out routines that are designed to bring predictability are implemented in a way that enables children to overcome barriers so that they can participate in everyday life. Underpinned by the team's enabling attitude, children are making good progress in many aspects of their lives.

All children enjoy excellent attendance at school where specialist support, such as speech and language services and occupational therapists, can be accessed. Staff work closely with these professionals to ensure that each child's unique and specific needs can be met. Barriers to communication are understood by staff and overcome using alternative methods such as picture exchange systems. This means that children can make choices about their day-to-day care.

Strong and meaningful relationships exist between the children and the adults that work regularly in the home. This was evident throughout the inspection when staff and children could be heard laughing and playing as they prepared to go on a trip to the seaside. This is one of several enjoyable and purposeful activities that have been planned for the summer holidays.

Every effort has been made to make the house as homely as possible without compromising the children's safety. The sensory needs of each child have been considered and used to develop a stimulating living environment that reflects the individual tastes and interests of the children. A professional said, 'I like the children's handprint canvases in the lounge and the picture of a fire, which I only realised was a picture when it was pointed out to me.'

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

Keeping children safe is a priority and is integral to daily practice. Children receive a high level of supervision and support that is in line with their assessed needs. This significantly limits the opportunity for children to be exposed to unnecessary risks, including those linked to their disabilities.

There has been one allegation since the last inspection. This was highlighted through the whistle-blowing procedure and managed effectively using a multi-agency approach. As a result, risk of abuse has been minimised for the individual child and vulnerable children as a whole.

Risk management plans are detailed, informative and easy to follow. They are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect each child's known and emerging behaviours, risks and vulnerabilities. Plans are discussed at the beginning of each shift to ensure that the member of staff allocated to the child knows how best to support them.

Staff are calm and caring in their approach. Records and comments from parents and professionals confirm that staff make the best use of preventative behaviour management techniques and positive relationships when helping children to manage their anxieties and frustrations. Overall, children respond positively to this approach, and physical restraint is only used when other approaches have failed.

An electronic system is used to record all incidents of restraint. Work is ongoing to help staff develop their report-writing skills, which are of variable quality. More significant is the absence of staff debriefs following a small number of incidents of restraint. For those that have been completed, the absence of a manager taking the lead means that this process is little more than a discussion between the staff involved in the incident. This is a missed opportunity for reflection and learning. Despite this, managers have signed off all incident reports.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is experienced and qualified. He has a detailed understanding of each child and works hard to ensure their needs are met and their plans are progressed. A professional said, '[Name of manager] is a very capable manager and knows the children on a very personal level.' She went on to say, 'I have no hesitation in stating that the home is meeting [name of child]'s needs and the manager makes this look easy. It is far from being an easy job.'

Staffing challenges were identified as a major issue at the last inspection. It is fair to say that this continues to be the case, and the home is still running with a high number of vacancies. There is strength in the core staff team, which demonstrates flexibility and commitment by covering extra shifts or coming in to support appointments or activities. However, the use of agency staff, and staff from other parts of the organisation, remains high. The manager has tried to minimise the impact on children by using the same replacement staff, some of whom now play a significant role in the children's lives.

Professionals and parents speak positively about the home. Despite the challenges brought about by staffing, they are confident that children are safe, well cared for and making good progress.

Staff supervision has improved significantly. Core staff meet regularly with the manager, providing an opportunity for reflection and professional development. This offer is extended to non-core staff who work regularly in the home. The manager is now focusing on the completion of annual appraisals, which are overdue for most staff.

Better management oversight and an improved organisational approach to training are providing more opportunities for staff to receive training and achieve qualifications. This is work in progress, but early signs of improved completion rates for mandatory and needs-led training are evident. However, the manager recognises the need to ensure that skills such as understanding autism spectrum disorder and communication awareness remain a priority for his team and that qualification deadlines are in place for those staff outside of statutory timescales.

Monitoring and oversight are stronger than previously reported, and areas of progress could be seen throughout this inspection. The manager is realistic about the progress so far, recognising that there is still more to do. He has attempted to use the biannual quality of care review as a foundation for development. A more evaluative, analytical and focused approach would be beneficial.

The home's statement of purpose does not provide an accurate picture of the home's staffing arrangements. It does not make clear who is part of the core team, the vacancies in the team and how non-permanent staff from the organisation are used.

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
<p>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. (Regulation 16 (1))</p> <p>Specifically, ensure that the information relating to staff makes it clear who is part of the core team, the vacancies in the team and how additional staff from the organisation are used in the home.</p>	31 August 2022
<p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; and</p> <p>ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child.</p> <p>use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(d)(e)(h))</p>	31 August 2022
<p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (4)(c))</p>	31 August 2022
<p>The registered person must ensure that—</p>	31 August 2022

within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")—

has spoken to the user about the measure; and

has signed the record to confirm it is accurate.
(Regulation 35 (3)(b)(i)(ii))

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff are supported to complete or refresh any outstanding mandatory training, including working with children with autism spectrum disorder and communication awareness. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.5)
- The registered person should ensure that timescales and deadlines are set for those staff who have not completed a relevant qualification within regulatory timescales. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.12)

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: 1233310

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: Craig Parkinson

Inspector

Paul Scott, Social Care Inspector

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