

2600119

Registered provider: Castle Care Homes

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is the first to be registered by the private organisation that operates it. The home provides care for up to two children who may have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. At the time of the inspection, two children were living in the home. One child spoke to the inspector about their experiences living at the home.

The home was registered by Ofsted on 2 October 2020. The current manager was registered by Ofsted on 26 July 2021.

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 this children's home to carry out a monitoring visit on 1 December 2020. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 November 2021

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 **good**

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

Date of last inspection: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
Not previously inspected		

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This is the home's first full inspection. Following the monitoring visit in December 2020, the home has undergone several periods of change. Four children have lived in the home at different times and two children have moved out. There have also been staffing and management changes.

Children say they like living in the home. They are treated with respect and warmth, and are supported to develop positive relationships with staff who understand and care about them. These relationships underpin the progress children make when living in the home.

Children are listened to and have the opportunity to regularly share their views through key conversations with staff and managers. Children benefit from care that is child centred and individualised. They are encouraged to develop a sense of belonging in the home and take pride in their bedrooms.

Staff work closely with education providers to encourage children's attendance. However, when children do not attend school, the plans to engage children in other learning are not always robust. As a result, children miss opportunities for learning.

Children's physical and emotional health needs are well understood. Staff work closely with specialist therapeutic services to support children's emotional and mental health needs. The team benefits from regular input from the therapist who is attached to the organisation. This input helps the team to work therapeutically with children, and staff offer clear, consistent boundaries that help children to feel safe.

The staff team understands the importance of supporting children to develop and maintain healthy relationships. The team has been proactive in responding to the challenges faced by the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring children have continued to see family and friends safely. The staff build relationships with families and support children to keep in touch with people who are important to them. Children are encouraged to attend sports clubs and pursue leisure interests to develop peer relationships and maintain healthy lifestyles.

Children are supported to develop their independence and life skills according to their individual needs, for example developing cooking skills and learning how to complete basic household chores.

Children are encouraged to express and learn about their identity and culture in a supportive and understanding environment, for example attending local pride events and learning about Black history.

The home provides a nurturing and welcoming environment for children. At the time of the inspection, a bedroom blind was waiting to be replaced to reduce the risk of hazard and to maintain privacy.

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

The home provides a strong therapeutic approach to care. Children say they feel safe, and professionals say that children are kept safe when in the home.

The children have complex behaviours and are highly vulnerable to safeguarding risks in the community and online. The staff team is vigilant to these risks and is in tune with children's vulnerabilities. Feedback from professionals is that staff go 'above and beyond' to address and identify risks. Risk assessments are detailed and robust. They reflect children's individual needs and provide effective strategies for staff to follow to keep children safe.

Staff understand the risks outside of the home and are proactive in responding to children who go missing. Staff have had some success in reducing the number of incidents of missing from home. They actively search for children and welcome them back on their return. Working as part of the wider system, they regularly share information and review plans. In some circumstances the team has made the difficult decision that, due to extreme risks in the wider community, it is not safe for children to continue living at the home. These decisions are made in consultation with other professionals and only when strategies to keep children safe have been exhausted.

Staff recognise the triggers which cause young people to hurt themselves. The number and frequency of incidents are reducing as staff use strategies effectively to calm children when they are in crisis.

Children's moves into the home have not always been planned ahead due to their individual circumstances. Steps have been taken to minimise the effect on children already living at the home and the manager has strengthened the process for future moves.

The number of times when staff need to hold children because of safety concerns is low. When children are held, they are low level and found to be proportionate with good oversight from the manager.

Sanctions are rarely used. However, when used, they are not always effective or helpful in supporting children to make changes to their behaviour. The manager has oversight of these but does not always evidence when she feels there are more effective ways to engage children following incidents; this is something she has taken action to address.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is held in high regard by children, staff and other professionals, and the team benefits from her clear leadership and guidance. She is suitably skilled and experienced and is working towards the relevant qualification.

The manager is supported in her role by the responsible individual and together they have good oversight of the home. Minor gaps in recording were identified during the inspection and the manager has taken action to address them.

Despite a number of staff changes, efforts have been made to minimise their effect on children. Staffing shortfalls are often covered from within the team and the use of agency staff has been minimal. This means children are only cared for by people who they know.

The team is currently stable, and it does not have any vacancies. Morale is high, and staff feel valued and supported. They have a range of skills and experiences and offer a can-do approach which is responsive to children's individual needs.

Staff have access to a wide range of specialist and mandatory training courses to ensure that they are able to meet children's needs, for example training to remove ligatures and understanding the effects of gang culture. They benefit from regular consultations with the therapy team to further strengthen their practice. Staff supervision takes place regularly but varies in quality, and recordings do not routinely demonstrate opportunities to reflect on staff practice.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children who are not participating in education are engaged in suitably structured activities. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.15)
- The registered person should ensure that records are individualised, and that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person should ensure that any sanctions used to address poor behaviour are restorative in nature with clear evaluation by the manager to ensure that they are purposeful and maximise the opportunity for children to reflect and learn. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.38)
- The registered person should ensure that all areas of the home remain in a good state of repair, specifically ensuring that window coverings in children's bedrooms maintain privacy and do not present potential hazards to children. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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: 2600119

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Castle Care Homes

Registered provider address: Flint Glass Works, 64 Jersey Street, Manchester M4 6JW

Responsible individual: Lee Matthews

Registered manager: Catherine Laws

Inspector

Caroline Bertram, Social Care Inspector

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