

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	03/12/2015
Unique reference number	SC015254
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Castle Homes Limited
Registered person address	The Manor House, High Street, Rothwell, Kettering, Northamptonshire, NN14 6BQ

Responsible individual	Shelley Whiting
Registered manager	Helen Llewellyn
Inspector	Ashley Hinson

Inspection date	03/12/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceeds the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

SC015254

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- The young people experience care that makes a significant and sustained difference to their lives.
- The strong culture of educational aspiration within the home results in young people making real educational progress.
- The home supports the young people to progress socially and to make and sustain relationships with friends and family.
- The young people receive care from a committed and caring staff team and a highly regarded manager.
- There are strong positive relationships between the staff and the young people.
- Feedback from families and external professionals is consistently highly positive
- The home regularly seeks and responds to the views of young people. One young person undertook his own inspection of the service.
- The young people benefit from access to a range of risk assessed leisure opportunities that enable them to be part of the local community.
- The young people say they feel safe in the home and professionals have no concerns about the quality of the service. The young people do not go missing from this home.
- The staff are able to manage young people's behaviour without the need for physical interventions. There is a culture of reward and praise within the home.
- The areas identified for improvement in this inspection have not impacted upon the safety or the progress of the young people. They relate to the need to better record information.

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

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

Ensure that when an allegation made against a member of staff does not meet the LADO threshold, that any decision regarding staff returning to work is clearly recorded. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 42 paragraph 9.5)

Ensure that when accepting new placements for young people, the impact on the existing group of young people has been fully recorded. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 56 paragraph 11.4)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is part of a large private children's care organisation and is registered to accommodate five boys with emotional and behavioural difficulties or a learning disability. The home offers a therapeutic service to boys with assessed needs linked to sexually inappropriate behaviour. The home has a school, which is registered with the Department for Education.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/02/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
12/11/2014	Full	Outstanding
19/03/2014	Interim	Good Progress
09/10/2013	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
The young people living in the home experience care that makes a significant and sustained difference to their lives. An independent reviewing officer said of one young person: 'I have seen him blossom since he came to the home. He has achieved some incredible milestones.' The young people make substantial and continued progress because of the care provided. This includes progress in relation to their education. For example, one young person has recently returned to mainstream education. His mother stated: 'Prior to coming to the home he was hardly in school. Getting into mainstream was down to the home. It was the home who worked to make this happen.' The school's deputy principal cited the relationship the home has built up with the school as being a key contributor to their accepting the young person as a pupil, despite the challenges and risks his enrolment entailed: 'We were happy to take him because of the experiences we have had with the home before.' As a result, a young person whose educational progress prior to admission was poor is now predicted to achieve high GCSE grades, significantly enhancing his life chances. All of the young people are accessing education. One young person said: 'I was doing nothing before but now I am in school.' Some young people attend education in the organisation's own school. Others have advanced from this school to mainstream education. Another young person is at college. The staff actively support young people to attend and achieve in school. For example, they transport one young person on a daily basis on a two hour round trip to a college. In another instance the staff worked hard, like a good parent, to ensure a young person had access to a school uniform that met his particular needs. This strong culture of educational aspiration within the home results in young people making real educational progress. The young people are also making substantial progress in relation to their personal and social development. Professionals described one young person as having barely been able to communicate prior to arrival in the home. Now, his social worker states: 'He has developed the skills to be able to express himself about his wishes and opinions.' This is another example of the quality of care the home provides, making an important difference to the lives of the young people. The young people are able to identify the impact that staying in the home has had on them. One young person spoke of the improvements in his relationship with his family, saying: 'My relationship with my mum is really good now.' For him, this means that reunification is now a real possibility.	

The staff team are stable in their makeup and consistent in their practice. They show interest in the young people and are keen to hear about their interests and experiences. When young people return from school staff greet them warmly. A social worker stated: 'The quality of the relationship between him and the staff is excellent, really excellent.' A grandparent of a young person who had recently moved on said: 'He really blossomed in the home because he loved the staff and the staff had so much patience with him and with us.'

Meal times are social occasions and young people and staff chat freely, with good humour. As a result, young people are able to experience a sense of belonging, which helps develop and reinforce strong relationships that underpin the progress they make.

The staff and young people are able to communicate effectively. Staff treat the young people with respect and are sensitive to their individual needs. Interactions are relaxed and good humoured. The young people share their thoughts and opinions with staff, including discussing issues that are difficult. A qualified therapist supports the young people and records show that young people explore the reasons for their placement in the service. One young person, talking about the overall difference the service has made for him said: 'They have made me realise that what I did was wrong and I need to make sure I don't do stupid things.'

The young people have access to all necessary health professionals. The home maintains clear records showing that they ensure young people register with appropriate health providers. The home works with the looked after children's nurse. The young people receive weekly therapeutic interventions from a qualified therapist, in line with the statement of purpose. There is regular verbal and written communication between the therapist and the care staff to ensure consistency and awareness. As a result, the home meets the young people's health needs well.

The staff work hard to establish young people's views. Regular young people's meetings take place. The manager responds to these and the young people are able to see what has happened because of the discussions. The manager frequently consults with young people, families and professionals. This includes the periodic use of questionnaires to elicit opinions. Feedback is consistently positive. At the suggestion of the manager, one young person has conducted his own inspection of the home, completing a report that has led to actions. The staff support young people to access advocates to assist them in their relationship with placing authorities.

The young people benefit from access to a range of leisure opportunities. These are risk assessed and enable young people to be part of the local community. Where young people have expressed an interest in attendance at places of worship, staff have enabled this. The home supports young people to establish friendships and relationships. These are subject to multi agency risk assessments. This means that young people are able to develop socially, reduce the risk of

isolation and are better prepared for adulthood. A young person said: 'They are preparing me for a future.'

To further reinforce their preparation for adulthood young people are encouraged to develop their independence skills. A social worker stated: 'They have done work with him to prepare him for independence. He cooks and shops and he has been doing some life skills work.' The manager is now exploring plans to develop an independence flat within an annex on the site. The home has prepared a moving on booklet for a young person. This provided considerable details about the area the young person was moving to. A family member said: 'They did everything to help his move. The move went really well.' The service supports the young people to have some of the skills and knowledge necessary for life after the home.

The home promotes contact in line with the young people's care plans. Where plans are for young people to return to their local area and potentially to live with their families, the staff have supported increased contact. A parent who is in this position said: 'They are not just there for him, they support me as well.' The young people are able to call their families as and when they like. The staff transport the young people to contact and are proactive at ensuring this meets individual needs. A social worker said: 'They are able to sort out the contact and I get updates from the home and mum on how things are going.' This means that young people are able to maintain, and in some cases establish and develop, effective relationships with family members.

When local authorities refer young people to the service there is consideration about the appropriateness of the potential placement. When referrals have been for young people whose needs are outside of the staff team's skill set, or the home's statement of purpose, the manager turns them down. She considers the impact on the wider group. A young person said: 'They make careful and safe decisions about who you live with.' A parent observed: 'They are very mindful of the dynamics of the group and how they get on.' However, the recording of decisions regarding placements could be more thorough in order to fully capture the rationale.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The young people are able to identify individuals who they could talk to if they had any concerns. A young person said: 'I feel safe here. This is a very safe environment and people listen to what you have to say.' Professionals reported no concerns about the safety of the young people placed in the home. The young people report no concerns regarding bullying. Regular bully buster sessions take	

place. As a result, the young people report feeling safe in the home.

New staff undergo appropriate recruitment checks. The staff are able to articulate appropriately how they would respond to any concerns about the safety of a young person. The staff are aware of the need to escalate concerns they feel have not been dealt with appropriately. They are aware of whistleblowing procedures and the role of the local authority designated officer.

The staff complete a large number of risk assessments for the young people. They review these each month. After each update the staff sign to say that they have read and understood them. The staff and young people then read the relevant risk assessments prior to the associated activity taking place. As a result, young people and staff are well aware of predictable risks, thus increasing the likelihood they will manage the risks safely.

Regular fire drills and tests are completed. All young people have been involved in a drill. Night time drills also take place. The manager maintains a clear overview of which staff have participated. This overview shows that all staff have taken part in an evacuation. This means that the fire safety arrangements protect young people as far as reasonably practical from the risks of fire.

No young people have gone missing since the last inspection. Each young person has a missing protocol. The risks young people pose to the wider community are carefully considered. In order to gain independent time without supervision the young people have to first engage with the therapeutic input. After this, young people may have a measured degree of independence within the local community, following a multi-agency assessment of risk. The manager draws on research to inform these decisions.

There have been no incidents of physical intervention since the last inspection. This is despite the staff in the home dealing with a number of challenging occurrences. The staff are able to manage young people's behaviour in such a way that the need to restrain is very rare. They employ a range of techniques based on the strong relationships they have established with the young people. On occasion, young people behave in such a way that staff need to apply a sanction or consequence. When this occurs, it occurs fairly.

The staff consistently promote positive behaviour. Where young people have received a negative consequence they are able to reduce this consequence through improved behaviour. The staff recognise good behaviour on a daily basis. They praise and reward young people when they do well. This includes the use of a surprise box, from which young people can select a wrapped present or a card which entitles the young person to some kind of benefit, such as a token to purchase something for their room. The staff celebrate young people's achievements. Certificates and awards are on display in the lounge.

Since the last inspection, there has been one allegation made against a member of staff by a young person. The manager informed the appropriate agencies of the allegation. This did not meet the threshold for the police or local authority to become involved and the member of staff returned to work following a restorative meeting with the young person. An internal investigation then took place which found no evidence of wrongdoing. The manager considered the risk of further allegations and staffing levels temporarily increased. However, there was no formal risk assessment completed regarding the member of staff returning to work.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
A positive, passionate and ambitious registered manager is in post. She has managed the home for the past four years. She holds the NVQ 4 and the registered manager's award. The young people, their families, staff and external professionals all hold her in extremely high regard. A young person, when asked about the best thing about the home, said: 'The manager. You can tell her anything and she will try to sort it out.' A member of staff said: 'She is absolutely great. She is aware of everything that is going on.' A deputy manager and two senior residential workers support her well. They share her high aspirations and commitment to improve the lives of the young people they support. The staffing levels enable the home to meet the needs of the young people as defined in the statement of purpose. The home operates a three staff to five young people ratio. Each young person has two key workers. This means that there are effective succession plans in place should a staff member leave, limiting the potential for inconsistency. It also enables the manager to mix and match the staff, based on their individual complementary skills, to increase the overall effectiveness of the key work role. The manager is able to discuss and evidence the difference the service makes. For example, the therapeutic reports include a monthly scale which shows that all young people have made progress. Across 15 possible domains for improvement, 14 show progress. There are clear case records and the manager is well aware of the needs and experiences of the young people. Consequently, the manager has a clear understanding of the progress that young people make whilst at the home. The management team regularly monitor the quality of care. They have a good understanding of the home's strengths and know the areas for development well. They are ambitious about the plans for the home and have high aspirations for the quality of the service. The manager welcomes challenge and the independent monitoring reports contribute to this. The manager seeks feedback from young	

people, social workers and the families of young people placed in the home. When young people have made complaints, the manager has responded to these robustly with formal written replies addressing young people's concerns. As a result, there is a culture of continuous improvement.

Parents and family members of young people speak highly of the support they receive. A family member said: 'They were absolutely brilliant with me. I was never afraid to talk to them or ask them anything.' Another parent said: 'They have been so brilliant I really cannot thank them enough.' Consequently, families see the staff and the manager as allies and work with them to make a difference to the young people's lives.

Professionals are also extremely positive about the service, with one social worker saying: 'I have found that out of the residential homes we work with, it is the best.' The manager has ensured that professionals are welcomed. A social worker said of the responses she received when visiting the home and speaking with staff: 'It is like what you would expect and hope for when you visit someone's family home.' Professionals describe communication as being very good, with staff responding to requests for information and support in a timely and effective manner. This positive engagement with families and professionals allows a joined up participative approach to meeting the young people's needs.

The staff receive regular supervision and annual appraisals. The young people contribute to the annual appraisal for staff. The staff access a range of training. All staff have recently attended both fire safety and child sexual exploitation training. The staff have access to a counselling scheme. As a result, staff have the support and structure in place to enable them to meet the needs of the young people in their care.

The manager challenges practice that she perceives not to be in the young person's best interests. She advocates on their behalf. An independent reviewing officer said: 'I am very impressed with the way that they advocate for him.' The manager does this respectfully, professionally and effectively. For example, during the inspection the manager was challenging a decision to end a young person's placement the day before his birthday. The young person did not want to move at this time, as it was so close to both his birthday and Christmas. This challenge resulted in a change of decision from the placing authority and the young person getting his wish.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service 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*.

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