

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	20/09/2016
Unique reference number	SC015254
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Castle Homes Limited
Registered provider address	The Manor House, High Street, Rothwell, Kettering, Northamptonshire NN14 6BQ

Responsible individual	Patricia Gregory
Registered manager	Helen Llewellyn
Inspector	Trish Palmer

Inspection date	20/09/2016
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 exceed 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	Outstanding
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

SC015254

Summary of findings

The children's home's provision is outstanding because:

- Strong leadership and management, coupled with a highly motivated staff team, ensure that children's individual needs are met.
- Children have made excellent progress living in the home.
- Children are supported to talk through thoughts and feelings with the home's therapist and to be able to learn to manage these.
- Relationships between staff and children are extremely positive. Children have trusted adults they can talk to.
- The home is warm and welcoming and the children are clearly at the heart of the home.
- Children have progressed educationally and there is excellent communication between the school and home.
- Staff are proactive in keeping children safe and they live in a safe environment.
- Staff understand the importance of contact for children and their families and actively support this.
- Staff understand the importance of transitions into and leaving the home and make these successful.
- Staff are proactive in supporting children to attend activities in the community and building and maintaining positive relationships with their peers.
- Children have life-story books which help them to understand their time in the home and give them positive memories.

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
16/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
03/12/2015	Full	Outstanding
20/02/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
12/11/2014	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
The children have progressed above and beyond expectations since their admission. Two children have successfully moved from the home in the past month, and staff remain in contact to offer support. A social worker commented, 'He has completely turned his life around. This is due to the staff nurturing him and treating him like an adult.' Another commented, 'He attends therapy every week, his whole attitude has changed. Prior to moving to the home his behaviours were worrying and he was aggressive. These have ceased and his behaviour is now positive.' Another commented, 'He is making the most of everything. Prior to coming to the home he was "disinterested". I took him out recently, he was chatty and he has never been like that before, this is so positive.' There is a stable, dedicated and consistent staff team, who all understand the children's past traumas and the impact that this can have on their lives. Staff spend quality time with the children when they return from school. This gives children and staff the opportunity to talk about their day and plans for the evening. A parent commented, 'He lives in a calm environment and it seems like a normal family home.' A social worker commented, 'It's a very welcoming environment, staff are committed to his care, within a week I could see he was relaxed and totally different.' A social worker commented, 'He has complex needs, there is a consistent staff team, which has enabled him to build relationships which in the past he has found difficult.' Staff are proactive in supporting the children to make decisions about their daily lives, as well as issues which may affect the group or home, giving them a strong sense of belonging. The children complete 'you said, we did' forms. These have included requests for books, pictures for the house, group activities and the pudding club where children get to choose a pudding a week for the menu. The manager responds to the children and a monthly summary of actions are taken to the children's meetings so that they can see that their wishes and feelings have been acted on. The manager will also respond to children in a sensitive way when they request something which cannot happen, and supports them to understand the reason. There are clear, robust, purposeful individual behaviour plans in place. These are discussed with the children and they have the opportunity to contribute, comment and sign these, which gives them ownership. A youth offending officer commented, 'He has not offended since being in the home, which is a massive improvement. He understands his feelings more and the risks to other people with his behaviours.' Behaviour plans are regularly reviewed and updated in consultation with children	

and social workers to ensure consistency.

The children also have the opportunity to complain or to discuss issues in children's meetings. The manager responds in writing, and this response is read out at the following meeting. This shows the children that the manager sees these as an important part of consultation and listening to them.

The children have made excellent progress with their education and some have been supported to progress to college placements. A headteacher commented, 'Communication with the home is very good, we receive an email before he arrives at school to let us know how he has been and if there are any issues, we also speak to staff when they pick him up. There is a good channel of communication, staff are genuinely interested in how he is doing and subjects such as mathematics are carried on into the home, which supports his studying.' Another headteacher commented, 'Communication between the home and school is outstanding. They are always in touch and will come into school if needed at the drop of a hat, and they always implement what is suggested and fully support his education.' A social worker commented, 'He is achieving academically and has started college.' A parent commented, 'He has come a long way and is now attending mainstream school full time, and his attendance is good.' Another commented, 'He did not attend education before and is now at college and has a job locally.' A young person commented, 'I have done really well. I am behaving better in school, no silliness as I am more mature.' This shows that children have also recognised their progress with education.

Children are actively supported to undertake independence skills according to their ages and starting points. They are involved in household chores and are encouraged to cook with staff. A social worker commented, 'They have worked hard to progress his independence in a phased way.' A social worker commented, about a young person who has recently left the home. 'The home was very proactive at following recommendations and helping to progress his independence skills. They are extremely supportive. He moved on, as he was ready to move to independence, and there was a delay with finding him a placement but they continued to work with him during this time and also applied for college in the area he was moving to, and have remained in contact with him.'

The children have individualised placement plans, which support the staff in working with them effectively. Children are involved in completing these and comment and sign to say that they are in agreement and understand the plan. This gives them ownership. A social worker commented, 'Staff are very creative and will try to find a way that works for him and look at all solutions. He has an individualised plan and they will look at how he can achieve what he needs to help him get there.'

Staff actively support the children to access a wide variety of activities, both in the home and in the community. Staff work hard to give the children new experiences

within a safe environment. A high-risk activity risk assessment is completed before attending an activity for the first time, with input from the children. This is reviewed once the activity has been completed to ascertain what if any support can be added or removed for the child to continue with the activity. It is then added to the child's risk assessments. This ensures that the children have the opportunities to have the same experiences as their peers while safeguarding themselves and others, and shows that staff are not risk-averse.

The children are encouraged and supported to build and maintain positive friendships in the community. In consultation with the social worker, a risk assessment was completed by staff to enable them to share the school, run with a parent of a child's friend in the village. Another child stays once a month overnight at a friend's house. The manager visited the parent, and together they completed a risk assessment. There is regular contact between the friend's parent and staff. This shows that staff understand the importance of children being able to build and maintain friendships with their peers while still ensuring that they are safeguarded.

The children have embraced life in the village. They attend regular games evenings in the local parish hall along with staff. They deliver the monthly village newsletter and attend local functions. The staff have a good relationship with the local shop and the shop staff will often feed back to the home's manager when she goes in how well the children have done with their weekly shopping. This gives the children a sense of belonging in their community.

The children raise money for a local charity which trains hearing dogs for the deaf. They plan activities or sponsored evenings, and have raised over £400 since starting. The trainer will regularly bring the dogs to the home to meet the children and as part of their socialisation training. They receive regular newsletters and updates about the dogs.

The children have life-story books of their time in the home, containing photos of activities and achievements. They also have memory boxes where they keep items such as cinema tickets or things that are important to them. Each child has a positive comments book where staff write a memory or achievement. These are bright and colourful and help to build positive memories of their time in the home.

The children are in excellent health and all routine health appointments are up to date. The local GP has signed to say which homely remedies can be given to the children. A social worker commented: 'He attends medical appointments now, which he didn't do in the past.' Staff promote healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle. None of the children smokes.

There is a robust medication policy in place. Staff store and record medication appropriately, a monthly audit is undertaken, and consents from parents and social workers are on file.

Staff understand the importance of contact for both the children and families and actively support this. The social worker of a child who lived some distance from the home commented: 'Staff support contact as he lives a long way from home. He very much identifies with his home area and this is important to him. They also take time to allow him to see the areas and places that he cares about in his home town. They actively support this, which is very positive.' A parent commented 'They have supported contact and he can now come home to visit. They have also provided extra money for the family as he eats a lot. We didn't ask, they just offered.' Parents who have visited the home commented that they were made to feel welcome by the staff and thought the house had a family feel.

The home is in a rural village and is decorated to a high standard and is clean and tidy. There are photos of staff and children, and there is a well-kept garden at the rear of the house. The children are supported in choosing the decor and furniture for the home and have been able to personalise their bedrooms. One child commented, 'I have designed my room. I would love to show you.' Another commented, 'I painted my room, I have posters and trucks and stuff, I like my room. I brought lots of things from home, like my quilt cover.' This shows that staff understand the importance of children being able to decorate their own space and bring memories from home which are important to them.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
The children live in a safe environment, and any extra measures in place, such as bedroom door alarms, are understood by children, families and social workers, and consent forms are signed and on file. All staff have had safeguarding training and those spoken to have a good understanding of safeguarding and the home's policy. Staff have also undertaken training about child sexual exploitation and radicalisation of children in order to be able to recognise concerns and to keep the children safe. Staff challenge all forms of bullying and discrimination, although this has not been an issue since the last inspection. Children are encouraged to talk about feelings towards each other during children's meetings, particularly if the behaviour has an impact on the group. 'Bully buster' is regularly discussed with the children so that they can recognise bullying and how to report this. There are forms on the children's notice board for children to use to report bullying, along with information of who they can contact if they are worried or upset. A child commented, 'Every month we have a bully buster meeting. We have a named bully buster member of staff. He does the meetings but we can talk to any of the staff. Bullying is taken	

seriously.’ This shows that staff are proactive in ensuring that children recognise the signs of bullying.’ An independent person regularly visits the children. They have her contact details, meaning that they have someone they know from outside the home to talk to.

The children know how to complain, but there have been no complaints from children since the last full inspection. A child commented: ‘I know how to complain. There’s a form but I would just talk to the manager and she would sort it.’ Another commented, ‘I have never had to complain but there is a phone which we can use if we don’t want to talk to staff, press 1 for child line and 2 for Ofsted.’ This shows that staff are proactive in ensuring that children have other agencies they can contact if they do not wish to speak to staff.

There has been one external complaint, when a friend of a parent thought a member of staff had hung up on her. The manager responded in an appropriate, timely way and the issue was resolved.

The children say that they felt safe living in the home. One commented, ‘I feel safe here because I know that the staff look at who comes to live here.’ Another commented, ‘I feel safe here knowing that there are staff here 24/7 so nothing is going to happen and I can talk to any member of staff if I’m worried.’

There are good, clear and concise individual risk assessments in place, which are regularly reviewed by the manager with the children, who comment on and sign them. If a risk assessment changes due to negative or positive behaviours, these are discussed with the child and recorded. This means that children are aware of the risks and how they can manage their behaviours in order to reduce these risks.

The manager completes an impact risk assessment as part of the referral process, and referrals will be turned down if there are concerns regarding negative impacts or safeguarding concerns with children in placement. There is a clear area risk assessment in place. The local police and parish council were consulted as part of the process. This ensures that staff know and understand the risks and use this knowledge to further safeguard the children.

All health and safety checks are completed and up to date. There is robust monitoring to ensure that the environment is safe.

Staff understand the impact that a new child coming into the home can have and will inform children of any new admissions as soon as possible. Children have discussed in meetings how they can make new children feel welcome.

Children are given a guide to the home on admission. This gives children information about how to complain, the expectations and day-to-day routines. Staff have also compiled a 10-minute guide, which answers questions that children want to know first, such as what time is bedtime and how much pocket money do I get.

There is also a parents' guide, which outlines who the staff are and has information about the children's guide, how to use the home's complaints procedure and outside agencies that they can complain to. This is effective in supporting parents in understanding how the home operates.

There have not been any incidents of children missing since the last full inspection. The home has a robust missing from home policy. All children have an individual protocol, which the manager and the local police sergeant have recently reviewed and amended. Relevant information is sent to him when a child is admitted to the home so that the police can act immediately if children go missing. A young person who was due to move into semi-independence was absent without authority and had gone back to his home area to start college. He stayed in touch with staff, his social worker and police. Staff travelled to meet him to ensure that he was safe and well and had food. The social worker commented that the home worked hard with other agencies to ensure that he stayed in contact and that he was safe.

Staff understand the risks that the children may experience through access to the internet. Children who have worked to having a mobile with internet access have risk assessments in place. For one child who uses his laptop for education, and in agreement with his parent and social worker, the home pays for a dongle. His laptop has the appropriate security settings and is routinely checked by staff. A child whose risk of having a mobile phone would leave him vulnerable complained to the manager that he wanted 'to be the same as his friends.' With permission from mum and social worker, she obtained a mobile phone onto which she was able to programme the numbers of the home, police, Ofsted and Childline. He can only ring these numbers and only these numbers can call his phone. He has no camera or internet. This has enabled him to have a phone which is safe and which he can use to safeguard himself if necessary when out on free time. This shows that the manager is resourceful in looking at solutions and will try to support children to have the same opportunities as their peers, even if the restrictions are different.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
The manager has been registered since 2012. She has the relevant qualifications and experience and is passionate about the work of the home, and the outcomes for the children. She is able to evidence the progression of each child and is committed to working with children, parents and professionals to support children successfully to achieve their full potential. Children, staff, parents and professionals spoken to hold her in high regard.	

The manager and the staff have high aspirations for the children and enjoy very constructive relationships with them. A social worker commented, 'The staff provide the whole package and are very committed to his care. At every six-week statutory visit they have a focus meeting with me. This ensures that all information is shared and progress reviewed.' Another commented, 'This is the best residential facility I have ever worked with.' A youth offending worker commented, 'This is the best care home I have ever worked with. They do the very best for the children in their care.' A parent commented: 'He now has a plan for his life and education, he is happy where he is and his last review was very positive. They are doing a wonderful job.'

The manager and staff work closely with parents and families. This supports consistency with the children. A parent commented, 'I can ring staff any time, which is fantastic. They never make me feel bad about ringing too much.' Another commented, 'I was concerned that he was going out too much after school, but staff were aware and addressed this with him. Staff work together with me and I feel really well supported.'

The manager is confident in raising issues with other professionals if she feels that plans in place are not working or are not in the best interests of the child, and there is evidence that she has been able to do this effectively. A headteacher commented, 'Recently the manager challenged the local authority regarding an education healthcare plan that was not completed when trying to get a child into college. This demonstrates the good relationship between the school and home and is very positive.'

The manager is dedicated to working closely with the staff and children regarding the running of the home and the implementation of new paperwork. She has recently devised a new 'tracker' for monitoring targets and outcomes for children and was proactive in involving them. This gave them a sense of ownership as well as a visual aid for them to recognise their own progress.

Staff meetings are held fortnightly and all staff attend. Staff also meet with the therapist to discuss the children, thus ensuring that staff are consistent in their approaches. A social worker of a young person who left recently commented, 'They did a great job. He engaged with therapy and the staff and key worker worked positively with him. This made a difference to him understanding consequences and making sense of what happened.'

Supervisions are monthly, with new staff being supervised every two weeks. Staff commented that supervisions are of good quality and are supportive and personalised.

Staff complete clear daily records, which give a clear view of the child's life and day-to-day routines and show the child's journey and progress since arriving in the

home.

Regular reports are sent to the social workers, including a weekly report from the therapists. Parents receive a separate monthly report, which is in a more 'parent friendly' format and outlines what the children have been doing over the last month: appointments attended, behaviours, education and positive outcomes. Parents spoken to commented that they found these informative and gave them a good insight into the children's lives. This shows that staff are imaginative in how information is shared with parents

Staff are up to date with all their mandatory training and have also completed therapeutic training to support them working with the therapist, in line with the home's statement of purpose and function. A new member of staff commented: 'I have had a lot of training, which has helped me understand the job and be able to work with the children.' The majority of staff have completed the national vocational qualification level 3. New staff have been registered and have started to complete the award. There are four assessors in the home, which will support staff in completing the qualification within the required timescale. The deputy also holds the national vocational qualification level 5.

Recruitment is robust, and all checks are completed and verified before staff begin to work in the home. The home uses the disclosure and barring service update, and a copy is kept in the home. Children are involved in the recruitment process. As part of the process, potential staff visit the home, children interview staff and, as a group, feed back to the manager about their thoughts and feelings. This shows that the manager values the children's views regarding who will be working in their home.

Staff complete a very detailed comprehensive induction programme during their six-month probation. These are regularly reviewed by supervisors and the manager to ensure that staff are working in line with the home's policies and procedures. A new member of staff commented, 'The induction pack is very in-depth, but it has really helped me in being able to learn about the job. The manager reviews every section and comments if I need to add anything, it then gets sent to head office to be signed off.'

The manager gains feedback about the home from social workers and other professionals. This is obtained through a professional consultation book. This ensures that concerns or recommendations are monitored and actions are recorded.

There are robust monitoring checks in place, which support the manager in identifying trends, patterns and the progression of children. She also uses the independent visitor's reports to support her monitoring of the quality of the home.

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 children looked after 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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