

# SC015254

Registered provider: Castle Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## 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 who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and/or learning disabilities. The home offers a therapeutic service to boys who have assessed needs that are linked to sexually inappropriate behaviour. The home has a school, which is registered with the Department for Education.

**Inspection dates:** 31 August to 1 September 2017

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account** **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

**Date of last inspection:** 13 March 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** Sustained effectiveness

## Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

## Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- The children continue to make excellent progress while living at the home.
- The dynamic manager and the staff team have high ambitions for the children and support the children to recognise these.
- The staff are encouraged to use original and creative ways of supporting the children to progress.
- The children are supported to have new and positive experiences while living at the home.
- Strong leadership and management, coupled with comprehensive training, enable the staff to understand and meet the needs of each child.
- Children have progressed exceptionally well at school and at college. Communication is excellent between the school and the home.
- The children have established strong, secure relationships with a constant, dynamic and exceedingly motivated staff team that knows and understands the children's individual needs.
- The staff understand the significance of the children being able to build and continue positive friendships in the community. The staff enable this to happen.
- The staff continually monitor and evaluate the children's progress, and fully involve the children in all aspects of their care.
- The children are fully immersed in village life; the local community is important to them.

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement    |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 13/03/2017      | Interim         | Sustained effectiveness |
| 20/09/2016      | Full            | Outstanding             |
| 16/03/2016      | Interim         | Sustained effectiveness |
| 03/12/2015      | Full            | Outstanding             |

## Inspection judgements

### Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The children continue to make excellent progress while living at the home. A highly motivated, dynamic and forward-thinking staff team that understands the children's individual needs facilitates this progress. A parent commented, 'He's done so well because the staff believe in him. He wouldn't be where he is now if it wasn't for them.' An independent reviewing officer remarked, 'The staff have made a big difference to a little boy who has never experienced good things, and now he is.'

The staff understand the importance of promoting and maintaining contact for the children with their friends and families, and facilitate this. A child commented, 'I have contact with my family and my ex foster carers, and staff sort this out for me.' The staff recognise that contact between children and families can be difficult and needs to be planned and regularly reviewed. This practice has resulted in some children being able to return to the family home, which is a positive outcome.

The children have developed excellent, trusting relationships with a knowledgeable staff team that understands the risks that the children face. The staff know how to support the children to help them to progress. All of the children spoke of staff members with whom they can speak if they are worried or upset. The children all say that the staff listen to and help them if they have concerns.

The staff understand the importance of education and it is incorporated into the children's daily lives. The children attend either school or college, depending on their age. Communication between the education providers and the staff at the home is excellent. An independent reviewing officer remarked, 'The staff managed to get him [child] into mainstream. I didn't think they would, but they were determined and it worked. They continued to meet with the school every six weeks to support him and the school.' A parent commented, 'He now goes to school, which I never thought would happen. He has just sat his GCSEs and is starting college.' The staff support the children to reach their full academic potential, and to have the same opportunities educationally as their peers.

The children's health needs are met well. The children are all registered with the local doctor, dentist and optician, and are supported to attend all of their routine health appointments, which are recorded along with any actions. The children attend weekly therapy sessions. The therapist and staff work closely together. They have a handover meeting before and after each session to ensure that any concerns are discussed. The therapist writes a comprehensive report after each session, which supports the staff with ongoing work that is incorporated into key-work sessions or workshop sessions with the children. The manager is proactive in ensuring that this therapy is an integral part of the children's care. This collaborative approach supports the staff to work in a consistent way with the children.

The staff encourage and support the children to begin to learn and develop some

independence around the home. The children are helped to keep their bedrooms tidy and to complete chores around the house. The staff understand the importance of the children learning new skills and having new experiences while learning to be independent. This involvement in the day-to-day upkeep of the house gives the children a sense of pride in their environment. The staff understand the importance of the children learning new skills and having new experiences while learning to be independent.

The children have begun to grow their own vegetables and have recently built an area for chickens, with an assault course and pen. The children spoke enthusiastically about the chicken area that they have built. They have named it 'Peckingham Palace'. The children are looking forward to the arrival of the chicks. This involvement gives the children a sense of pride in being able to care for something which is important to them, as well as being able to grow their own vegetables that they can cook.

The staff understand that transitions into and out of the home can have an impact on the dynamics of the current group. There have been no admissions since the last inspection. One child is due to move in a few weeks' time and another in November 2017. The staff have worked closely with parents, social workers and the children to ensure that the transitions are managed well. A parent remarked, 'They believed in him and boosted his confidence. I was fully involved in his transition home.' The staff understand the importance of good, clear planning to ensure that transitions are successful.

The staff recognise the importance for children of building memories of their time at the home. All of the children have memory boxes containing things that are important to them, such as photo albums of activities and the celebrations of any special events. Consequently, the children take positive memories of their time at the home when they leave.

The children plan, with their key workers, how they wish to leave the home. The staff identify the importance of children being able to say goodbye in a way that is meaningful to them.

The children have clear individualised and personalised placement plans that support the staff in working with them effectively in all aspects of their lives. For younger children, a more child-friendly version is written so that they can understand the plan in a more meaningful way. The key workers go through the plans with the children every month and the children comment and sign their plans. This helps the children to contribute to and understand their plans.

The children have regular key-work sessions. The children comment and sign after each session to show their involvement and their understanding of the session. The key worker evaluates the key-work session records monthly and the manager evaluates and comments on them. The sessions are purposeful for the children. Key workers complete workshops with the children; these cover a wide variety of topics to support the children in their everyday lives, and are individualised to suit each child.

The staff have extensive knowledge and understanding of why the children are in care and their current needs. A child commented, 'I know why I am in care and have discussed this in key-work sessions.' The children understand and can come to terms with why they are in care while living in a safe and supportive environment.

The staff work closely with parents and social workers to share information. Informative and detailed monthly reports are sent to the social workers. A parent commented, 'I have a monthly letter which updates me on how he is doing. I can call anytime and if he has been up to something they ask me to have a word, which makes me feel involved.' The staff understand the importance of parents being involved in the care of their children when appropriate.

The children all attend regular children's meetings. These meetings are used to discuss activities, purchases for the home or any challenging behaviours. The staff use these meetings to consult with the children to see whether the children have any worries or concerns. The manager reads the minutes and comments on the issues raised and she provides feedback to the children. The feedback that they receive shows the children that the manager and the staff listen to and act on their wishes and feelings.

The staff actively encourage the children to participate in a wide variety of activities, both at the home and in the community. As some of the children have been assessed as high risk, they are staffed on a one-to-one basis. Those children have the opportunity to attend activities or to take part in hobbies that give them the same experiences as their peers. Some of the children have been able to build up some free time in the community in consultation with their social workers. A parent commented, 'The staff have been able to give him some free time, but with all the safety nets in place.' The staff are not risk-averse; they want the children to be able to have new experiences while living in a safe environment.

The manager has been proactive in looking at how children can have new experiences. Each child has a 'good life plan', which they complete with their key worker in time frames of one to four months, four to 12 months and 12 months to two years. This has been very successful, with one child going on an aeroplane and another starting driving lessons. This forward-thinking idea means that the children can complete short- and long-term goals and broaden their chances of having new and exciting challenges.

During the inspection, some of the children returned from a camping holiday with the staff and were eager to tell the other staff and children about their holiday. The holiday had been well planned and all of the necessary risk assessments and permissions had been gained. The staff put on a special lunch for the children when they arrived home to give them the opportunity to talk about their holiday and to celebrate one of the children's birthdays. Such opportunities give the children experience of positive time away from the home and enable them to build memories.

Mealtimes are seen as a sociable occasion and all of the staff and the children eat together. The children often help the housekeeper to prepare healthy meals. During the

inspection, an evening meal and lunch were observed. There was lots of chatter, both in a group and individually, and there was appropriate banter. The staff understand that mealtimes can be difficult for some children who have not had the opportunity to experience sitting around a table. Mealtimes are fun and give the staff and the children good opportunities to share news.

The home is located in a small village where the children have embraced village life. The children have recently been involved in the village litter-picking day and they attend events in the community hall and in the local family pub.

The house is spacious and decorated to a high standard. The children have been involved in choosing furniture and the decor for the house, and have personalised their bedrooms. There are photos of the staff and the children undertaking activities. The home has a warm and nurturing feel. A parent commented, 'When I visit the home, it has a lovely atmosphere, just like a family home.'

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding**

The children say that they feel safe living at the home. They know how to complain, and know that they can speak to staff if they are worried or upset. There have been no complaints since the last inspection. The complaints procedure is explained in the children's guide and on the notice board, along with information about organisations they can contact if they do not wish to speak to staff. On admission, the children are given a welcome box which contains writing paper, stamps and envelopes. Consequently, the children are aware of how to complain if they need to, which provides them with a sense of security.

The staff actively challenge unwanted behaviours and reinforce boundaries. These behaviours are discussed in key-work sessions and house meetings. These discussions ensure that the children understand their behaviours, and help them to work with staff to reduce them. A parent commented, 'In his last placement he didn't have boundaries; since coming to the home he has rules and he knows the consequences.' An independent reviewing officer commented, 'I have seen staff work with him, they have really good boundaries.'

Sanctions are fair, proportionate and given appropriately. The staff discuss both positive and negative behaviours and the children sign and comment on the sanctions. The manager evaluates the effectiveness of the sanctions. This reflection helps the children to understand that the staff recognise when they have done something well. It also provides an opportunity for the children to understand and develop skills to reduce negative behaviours.

The manager attends monthly meetings with other services in the area. Using research-based practice that is shared during the meetings, the manager develops the staff's understanding of safeguarding. The meetings enhance the manager's own knowledge of trends and patterns in the area relating to safeguarding, and how these are identified to

reduce risk and further safeguard the children.

The manager regularly reviews the highly effective and comprehensive risk assessments. The children review the risk assessments monthly with their key workers and comment and sign to say that they understand their current risks and how these can be reduced. This practice further safeguards the children. An independent reviewing officer commented, 'The plan was for risk reduction, which has been achieved by a dedicated and supportive team'

There have been no incidents of the children going missing since the last full inspection. Each child has an individual protocol for the staff to follow should this happen. The staff, through staff meetings and supervision, ensure that they are up to date with each child's plan. This further safeguards the children.

The local police community support officer visits the home. She commented, 'I pop in on a regular basis to build relationships with the children. I have also spoken to children regarding their behaviour at the home and what would happen if they behaved like that in the community. The police do not have any [other] involvement in the home as there haven't been any issues.'

The staff have undertaken safeguarding training and those spoken to have a good understanding of safeguarding and the home's policy. Staff have undertaken training in relation to child sexual exploitation and radicalisation, which supports them to recognise and report concerns. The staff understand the children's individual risks and vulnerabilities.

The staff work successfully with the children so that they are able to learn and understand their individual risks and vulnerabilities. Two of the children have independent free time in the community and one child regularly stays overnight at a friend's house. Another child has recently been given a mobile phone and can have access to the internet. He remarked, 'Staff teach you to keep yourself safe. I now have a mobile phone and I did internet safety with my key worker before I could have this.' A parent said, 'He [child] has a girlfriend now and the manager has met with her parents to make sure they are both safe.' The staff regularly consult with social workers and update safety plans to ensure that the children are kept safe when they are having more independent time. The staff are not risk-averse and they understand that the children need to learn to manage risk in line with their age, understanding and vulnerabilities.

There have been no incidents of bullying since the last full inspection. A child stated, 'If we felt bullied we would talk to the member of staff who is our bully buster.' Bullying is discussed during house meetings and the children attend workshops with the staff member who is the bully buster. The children recognise the signs and symptoms of bullying and how to report any concern.

## **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

A forward-thinking, dynamic manager has been in post since January 2012, and has the relevant qualifications and experience to manage the home. She is dedicated and committed to the work of the home and she continues to drive improvement to ensure that the children have positive experiences while meeting their full potential.

The manager and staff have high aspirations for the children. This has led to them having high aspirations for themselves. A child remarked, 'Since moving here I have changed such a lot. There is nothing about this home I would change.' A parent commented, 'From where he was to where he is now, he's done amazingly well because of the manager and staff.'

The staff spoken to report that they feel fully supported by the manager and are encouraged to be proactive in coming up with new ideas to support the children to progress.

The manager continues to use research-based practice to enhance the experiences and progress of children and drive the home forward. The staff are currently having secure-base attachment training to enhance their care practice. The training is discussed with staff during regular staff meetings to ensure consistent practice. The staff have regular supervision which supports them to work effectively with the children.

The quality of professional relationships is strong and links are firmly established with a wide variety of professionals. An independent reviewing officer said, 'They work very well with me and use me appropriately. I'm always kept updated.'

Relationships with parents and carers are very good. The manager and staff go out of their way to get to know the children's parents and ensure they feel comfortable and are included in their child's care by building strong and supportive relationships. Parents reported that they can telephone at any time to speak to the staff and are always made to feel welcome when they visit the home.

The staff have completed all of their mandatory training, along with specific training in managing sexually harmful behaviours. The staff are undertaking secure-base practice training and have completed an eight-week training course on working with children who have autistic spectrum disorders. This training was completed through workbooks, which were assessed by an independent training company. The staff either have, the level 3 national vocational qualification in residential childcare, or are currently undertaking this and are scheduled to finish within the required timescale. The manager is focused on the staff having the right training to support the children.

The manager is confident about raising issues with the relevant professionals if she feels that the plans in place are not in the best interest of the child, or that they fail to safeguard the children. This practice means that the manager is aware of each child's individual plan and challenges appropriately when plans which do not fully support the child. An independent reviewing officer commented, 'I always have good, detailed

reports before each review, which the children have had the opportunity to sign and comment.'

Monitoring checks are robust and the manager uses these as part of her review of the service. Key workers audit the children's files on a monthly basis and the deputy manager or the manager evaluates the outcome. Any gaps or uncompleted checks are raised with individual staff through supervision. The manager trusts her staff and wants them to have responsibility for monitoring their key-children's progress.

The independent visitor's reports are robust. The manager uses these as part of her monitoring system, and to support the continued development of the home.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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:** SC015254

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Castle Homes Limited

**Registered provider address:** Fifth Floor, 80 Hammersmith Road, London W14 8UD

**Responsible individual:** James Imber

**Registered manager:** Helen Llewellyn

## Inspector

Trish Palmer: social care inspector

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