

SC020545

Registered provider: Castle Homes Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is part of a large private organisation. It provides care for up to five children with complex behaviours because of their childhood experiences. The home was registered with Ofsted in December 1998.

The manager was registered with Ofsted to manage the home in August 2021.

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 May 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 16 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: declined in effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

At the interim inspection on 16 March 2022, serious failings were identified in the leadership and management of the home. These shortfalls were found to compromise the safe care of children and their experiences of living in the home. The home was judged to have declined in effectiveness. In addition, a compliance notice was issued in relation to regulation 13 (the leadership and management standard).

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16/03/2022	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
28/09/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
26/11/2019	Full	Good
19/11/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Three children live in the home. They have all lived in the home for over three years. One child is currently transitioning from the home in line with their care plan. Children have mixed views about the home. One child told the inspector they no longer want to live there. The registered manager has shared the child's wishes and feelings with the child's placing authority.

The home is undergoing redecoration and refurbishment. There is a home-improvement plan in place, which the registered manager is working through. However, some communal internal doors and kitchen cupboards still have locks on them. Although the internal doors are not locked, this gives the home an institutional feel. Children like their bedrooms, which have recently been redecorated.

Staffing issues and a high use of agency staff compromise children's overall experiences, in particular their ability to form nurturing relationships with staff. Children, staff and external professionals consistently highlighted these issues during the inspection. Nevertheless, the inspector observed some positive interactions between children, staff and the registered manager.

The registered manager does not respond promptly when children raise concerns about their care. The home's records describe that some children feel 'ganged up on' by staff, and that staff are 'two faced'. Children also said that staff do not review their reward charts. One child said that staff have 'done nothing to help' their relationships. As a result, children do not feel listened to and feel frustrated.

Children do not feel comfortable when agency staff work in the home. One child told the inspector that they had refused to attend a health appointment. This was because an agency member of staff, who they had met only once, was accompanying them. They said they were very upset as they had felt anxious and had waited a long time for the appointment. To date, this health need remains unmet.

Even though there are staffing challenges, some children are making progress. Most children have good attendance at school. The registered manager has advocated on behalf of two children for alternative education provision. As a result, children are studying in a provision that is better suited to their needs. Two children are currently undertaking their GCSE exams. Staff support them to revise and ensure that they have everything they need to do so.

Staff and managers support children to spend time with people who are important to them. This includes their friends visiting for tea or for a sleepover. This helps children to develop a positive sense of identity and self-esteem.

Staff help children to develop hobbies and interests. As part of developing their independence, staff support children to work part time. One child works in a café at the weekend, which they said they 'love'. Another child does a paper round. As a result, children build confidence and a sense of responsibility.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Managers have made changes to the format of risk assessments. Information contained in them is now more pertinent to children's needs. The registered manager has particularly improved risk assessments for children who self-harm. However, some strategies are not proportionate, for example preventing children from leaving the home if they are in a low mood. This may place unnecessary restrictions on children and is also likely to have a negative impact on their mental health.

Risk assessments are regularly reviewed. However, the rationale or outcome of the review is not always clear. As a result, staff may not have all the information they need to keep children safe.

Children rarely go missing from home. There are clear plans in place for staff to follow in the event that this occurs. However, staff are not always proactive when implementing safeguarding measures. For example, during one incident, a child left the home in a low mood. Staff failed to charge the home's mobile phone. As a result, they were unable to keep in touch with the child and other staff members. This increased the child's vulnerability and compromised their safety.

Safeguarding incidents in the home have reduced in number. However, the registered manager and staff do not always show enough professional curiosity. For example, one child sustained an injury while spending time away from the home. The registered manager did not fully consider how this may have happened. Nevertheless, staff sought medical attention for them straight away.

Direct work with children is an improving picture, albeit this work is not undertaken by consistent staff. Staff help children to understand how to keep safe online. They also help children to develop alternative strategies to regulate their feelings, such as the use of self-soothe boxes which children help to create. As a result, self-harming behaviours have reduced for some children.

Leaders and managers have not actively assessed the risks in respect of fire safety. This includes liaising with any external professionals, such as the fire service. As a result, managers do not know whether the home environment is safe.

There are improvements in the home's recruitment process. However, the registered manager does not ensure that the references of agency workers have been verified. Therefore, they cannot be certain that agency workers are safe to work with children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Serious concerns remain in relation to the leadership and management of the home. Staffing vacancies have made it necessary for managers to work shifts. Senior managers have also offered some additional support. However, these gaps have compromised managerial capacity and oversight. This has contributed to several significant management shortfalls.

The home does not have enough permanent staff to care for the number of children who live in the home. Agency staff who are not experienced or skilled sometimes work in the home. Children who live in the home are not receiving continuity of care. This is having an impact on their relationships with staff and how their needs are being met. Steps to recruit new staff members are being undertaken.

The registered manager's understanding of monitoring and review systems is weak. The registered manager has ineffective systems to review and evaluate the care children receive. Therefore, there are gaps in the registered manager's knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. The registered manager does not have regular oversight of the home's daily records or the daily handover. As a result, they are not always aware that incidents have taken place, such as children leaving the home in a low mood.

The registered manager's monitoring systems do not identify shortfalls in staff practice. For example, the registered manager does not monitor whether fire safety checks are undertaken. They were unaware that, at times, monthly fire drills have not taken place. This is unsafe practice and places children at risk of harm.

Staff do not receive supervision in line with the home's policy. Some staff have gone significant periods of time without formal supervision. In addition, staff have not received an annual appraisal of their performance. As a result, staff do not receive adequate support to improve and develop their practice.

The provider's internal quality assurance is also ineffective. A recent visit to the home did not identify the shortfalls in the registered manager's oversight of the home. In addition, the independent visitor does not provide scrutiny and challenge. This contributes to the provider's lack of understanding of the home's weaknesses.

As a result of the concerns identified regarding the leadership and management of the home, the compliance notice in relation to regulation 13 will be reissued. In addition, six of the requirements issued at the last inspection have been restated.

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, 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
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— meet each child's behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child's relevant plans; encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding; strive to gain each child's respect and trust; understand how children's previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(viii)(ix)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that staff are skilled to recognise and understand the impact that children's previous experiences may have on their emotional and behavioural presentation. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	11 July 2022

The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(v)(vii)(b)) This relates to staff's understanding and implementation of each individual child's risk assessment, and their role in keeping children safe. In addition, risk assessments should clearly state the reason for their review, the outcome and the strategies staff need to follow in order to keep children safe. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	11 July 2022
* The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child;	11 July 2022

use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(f)(h)) In particular, the registered manager should ensure that they have systems in place to identify shortfalls in relation to poor practice, children's risk assessments and recording of incidents. In addition, leaders and managers should ensure that they have clear systems in place to understand and improve children's experiences and the quality of care they receive. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(d)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that children are cared for by staff who know them well and understand their needs.	11 July 2022
Restraint in relation to a child is only permitted for the purpose of preventing— injury to any person (including the child); serious damage to the property of any person (including the child); or a child who is accommodated in a secure children's home from absconding from the home.	11 July 2022

Restraint in relation to a child must be necessary and proportionate. (Regulation 20 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)) This particularly relates to the registered person and staff ensuring that restrictions on children's ability to leave the home are only used when proportionate and necessary.	
If the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005(a) applies to the home— the registered person must ensure that the requirements of that Order and any regulations made under it, except for article 23 (duties of employees), are complied with in respect of the home. (Regulation 25 (2)(b)) This specifically relates to leaders and managers ensuring that the home's fire risk assessment is reviewed. This includes liaising with any external professionals, such as the fire service, and acting on any raised recommendations. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	11 July 2022
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— the individual has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills for the work that the individual is to perform. For the purposes of paragraph (3)(b), an individual who works in the home in a care role has the appropriate qualification if, by the relevant date, the individual has attained—	11 July 2022

the Level 3 Diploma for Residential Childcare (England) ("the Level 3 Diploma"). The relevant date is— in the case of an individual who starts working in a care role in a home after 1st April 2014, the date which falls 2 years after the date on which the individual started working in a care role in a home. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(b) (4)(a) (5)(a)) In particular, the registered manager should ensure that all staff working in the home have achieved the appropriate qualification within the required timescales. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(d)) In particular, the registered manager should ensure that agencies commissioned to employ agency staff carry out all the relevant checks to ensure their suitability to work with children. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	11 July 2022
The registered person must ensure that all employees—	11 July 2022

receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. Regulation 33 (1) (4)(b)(c)) This refers specifically to the registered person ensuring that all staff, including agency staff, receive regular practice-related supervision, in addition to an annual appraisal.	
The registered person must use reasonable endeavours to ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether— children are effectively safeguarded; and the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. The independent person's report may recommend actions that the registered person may take in relation to the home and timescales within which the registered person must consider whether or not to take those actions. The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person's report to— HMCI; upon request, the local authority for the area in which the home is located; the placing authorities of children; the registered provider and, if applicable, the registered manager; and the responsible individual (if one is nominated). (Regulation 44 (1) (4)(a)(b) (5) (7)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)) This specifically relates to the capability of the independent visitor, in particular their ability to identify the shortfalls in the care children receive and submitting their reports in a timely manner.	11 July 2022

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that the home environment is homely and domestic and does not have an institutional feel. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph3.9)

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: SC020545

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Castle Homes Care Limited

Registered provider address: The Forge, Church Street West, Woking, Surrey
GU21 6HT

Responsible individual: Sophie Nicholls

Registered manager: Adele Boffey

Inspector

Sarah Berry, Social Care Inspector

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