

SC020545

Registered provider: Castle Homes Care Limited

Assurance 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 due to their childhood experiences. The home was registered with Ofsted in December 1998.

The manager was registered with Ofsted in August 2021.

Inspection date: 14 July 2022

Date of last inspection: 11 May 2022

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection:

A compliance notice under regulation 13, the leadership and management standard, was issued following the home's full inspection on 11 May 2022.

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

The inspector has looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

We identified the following serious and widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance inspection:

- Safeguarding arrangements in the home are not always effective.
- Some staff do not have the skills, experience or knowledge to consistently meet the children's needs.
- Recruitment practices are deficient. Agency staff are not safely vetted.
- Leaders and managers fail to respond effectively when children raise complaints.
- Management oversight and monitoring of the home is inadequate.
- Leaders have not taken sufficient action to address requirements made at previous inspections.
- Staff do not consistently receive regular supervision and annual appraisal of their performance.

The care of children

During this inspection, the inspector identified serious and widespread concerns in the leadership and management of the home. The monitoring and oversight of the home have failed to identify several shortfalls that have had an impact on children's progress and day-to-day experiences at the home. In response, Ofsted has issued a notice restricting accommodation at the home. In addition, compliance notices were issued under regulations 12 and 32. Furthermore, a compliance notice under regulation 13 has been issued for a third time.

Leaders and managers fail to respond effectively when children raise complaints. On one occasion, a complaint was made by a child to the registered manager. The complaint made by the child related to the practice and conduct of staff. However, the registered manager failed to record the complaint or take any action in response to the child. Failure to respond to children's views leaves them without a voice and vulnerable to harm.

There were two children living in the home at the time of this inspection. Since the last inspection, one child has left the home. This move was well planned and supported by staff. Also, the child was able to enjoy a leaving party with staff and leaders. This means that children feel supported and have a positive experience when leaving the home.

The responsible individual has taken action since the last inspection to address shortfalls in relation to the home's fire doors. This means that they are now compliant with regulations. As a result, the home's environment has become safer. However, there are areas of the home that now require redecoration and

development. The responsible individual has an action plan to ensure that this work is carried out.

Some children enjoy positive relationships with some staff. One child had returned from a short holiday with staff during the inspection. She spoke positively about the experience. Also, staff advocate well for children. For example, they have raised concerns about the performance of external professionals when they have not completed actions identified in one child's care plan. This reassures children and helps them to feel supported.

The safety of children

Safeguarding arrangements in the home are not always effective. Children's risk assessments do not reflect children's known risks, are inaccurate and are not routinely updated. For example, one child's risk assessments do not specify that the child is allowed unsupervised time in the community. Furthermore, leaders have failed to ensure that clear guidance and protocols are in place for staff to follow to keep children safe online. This means that staff do not have up-to-date information to help them manage risks to children. This places children at risk of harm.

Recruitment of staff to work in the home is not safe. Leaders have failed to ensure that the recruitment agency commissioned to provide agency workers to the home always explores the employment history of staff. This was not identified by leaders before the staff member started work in the home. In addition, the registered manager has failed to ensure that references provided for agency staff are consistently verified by the agency. This leaves children at risk of care from unsuitable adults.

Some staff do not have the skills, experience or knowledge to consistently meet the children's needs. Due to staffing shortages, non-permanent staff have been required to lead shifts in the home. On one occasion, inadequate planning by the registered manager meant that two agency staff were left working alone with the children. This led to one child raising a complaint to the registered manager. A lack of diligence by leaders and managers in ensuring that children receive care from experienced staff who know them well has left children vulnerable to harm.

Children rarely go missing from the home. On one occasion since the last inspection when this did happen, staff managed the incident well and followed the child's plans. They remained in communication with the relevant professionals and searched areas known to be used by children. This ensured that the child returned to the home promptly. However, the child did not receive a return home interview with an independent person. In addition, this was not challenged or raised as a concern by the registered manager.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

Since the last inspection, the registered manager has been subject to an ongoing internal investigation into her practice and has been absent from the home. Also,

she has submitted her notice to leave her role and was not working in the home during the inspection. As a result, the responsible individual and a manager from another home in the company have been providing leadership support.

Staff do not consistently receive regular supervision and annual appraisal of their performance. In addition, staff informed the inspector that they do not receive records from the registered manager following supervision sessions. This means that staff are not given opportunities to reflect on their practice and consider how they are promoting the welfare of children.

The registered manager has not ensured that all staff complete the qualification required to work in the home within the compulsory timescales. This has the potential to impact on the quality of care received by children.

Management oversight and monitoring of the home are inadequate. Monitoring systems used by the registered manager have failed to identify the wide-ranging shortfalls in the quality of care provided in the home. Ineffective monitoring systems do not support the protection of children or improve the quality of care that children receive.

Leaders have not taken sufficient action to address requirements made at previous inspections. At the last full inspection, Ofsted raised 10 requirements and one recommendation. However, leaders have failed to meet seven of the requirements and the recommendation. This inspection found that a compliance notice regarding regulation 13 was unmet, despite it having been issued twice. Repeated breaches of regulation and failure to meet a compliance notice on two occasions do not assure Ofsted that leaders have the capacity to take effective action to bring about the change necessary to improve the quality of care that children receive.

The home's responsible individual has recently become more involved in the day-to-day running of the home. During the inspection, she demonstrated that some action has been taken to safeguard children. For example, formal investigations into staff practice have started. Furthermore, new monitoring systems have been put in place to promote the welfare of children and there have been improvements in the external monitoring of the home. However, it is too early to determine their impact.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/05/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
16/03/2022	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
28/09/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
26/11/2019	Full	Good

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; and 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 in recognising and understanding 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.	25 September 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— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child’s relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; and 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)(i)(b)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that risk assessments contain up-to-date, clear and specific guidance for staff to follow. The registered person should also ensure that the home’s day-to-day care is planned effectively to keep children safe. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	25 September 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— ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home’s workforce provides continuity of care to each child; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; and	25 September 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)(d)(e)(f)(h)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that they have systems in place to identify shortfalls in relation to poor practice, children's risk assessments and recording of complaints. Also, the registered person should ensure that children are cared for by staff who know them well and understand their needs. 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 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— 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 (3)(b) (4)(a) (5)(a)) In particular, the registered person 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.	25 September 2022
*The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety.	25 September 2022

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 person 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.	
The registered person must ensure that all employees— 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 and an annual appraisal. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	25 September 2022
Subject to paragraph (6), the registered person must establish a procedure for considering complaints made by or on behalf of children. The registered person must ensure that a record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of any investigation. (Regulation 39 (1) (3))	25 September 2022

In particular, the registered person should ensure that any complaint made by a child is acted on in line with the home's policies and procedures.	
---	--

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- 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, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that when a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority provides an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)

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

Dean Wilton, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022