

SC020545

Registered provider: Castle Homes Care Limited

Interim 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 who present with complex behaviours because of their childhood experiences. The home was registered by Ofsted in December 1998.

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

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection date: 16 March 2022

Date of last inspection: 28 September 2021

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

This inspection

The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection

This home was judged requires improvement to be good at the last full inspection.

At this interim inspection, Ofsted judged that it has declined in effectiveness. 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.

Due to the significant concerns found during the inspection, Ofsted raised eight requirements and issued one compliance notice under regulation 13, the leadership and management standard.

Staff do not respond to children's risks effectively. For example, staff failed to demonstrate professional curiosity when concerns were raised in relation to a child presenting with thoughts to self-harm. Staff did not implement a proactive response to reduce the harm to the child, and as a result, the child's risks have increased. This approach does not ensure that children are kept safe from harm.

Children have not developed trusted and secure relationships with the adults looking after them. Children describe poor relationships with staff and say that they do not feel listened to. Staff lack understanding of the children's experiences and background, and how this may impact on their behaviour and emotional development. The manager has limited awareness of the experiences of children in the home and has not supported staff effectively to improve the quality of care provided to the children. Consequently, children's day-to-day experiences in the home are not always positive.

Leaders and managers have not implemented effective lone-working risk assessments to safeguard children and staff when their relationships become strained. Leaders and managers have failed to put effective measures in place to ensure that the experiences of children and staff in the home are monitored and reviewed adequately. This means children and staff are not supported to always feel safe and happy in the home. This may increase children's vulnerability to harm.

Staff and managers are not challenging local authorities effectively and taking action when they are concerned that the statutory requirements for children are not met. As a result, children do not have adults in their lives who consistently advocate for them, and who ensure that other agencies take accountability for not meeting their duties and responsibilities.

Staff do not complete regular key-work sessions with children. For example, one child who has struggled with their identity has not been supported to help them develop their resilience and promote a positive sense of self. There is limited evidence that staff are completing key-work sessions with all children in the home.

This means that staff are not supporting children to make progress in all areas of their lives.

The manager's recruitment of agency staff is poor. They do not ensure that recruitment agencies commissioned to provide staff carry out all the relevant background checks. Consequently, the manager is not fully satisfied that all adults working with children are safely recruited.

The quality of recording of children's day-to-day records is inconsistent. For example, staff do not consistently record when they have completed phone checks or checks on the social media platforms that the children use. The manager does not have a system in place to monitor that staff are following the children's risk management plans. As a result, there are poor monitoring systems in place to manage the risks to children.

Staff use physical restraint as a last resort to manage children's behaviour. However, staff do not record a detailed description of physical interventions, and the manager does not consistently complete debriefs with staff to support reflection and to identify poor practice. This practice does not support effective monitoring of incidents and therefore poor practice may not be immediately addressed.

Some strategies used by staff makes the environment feel institutionalised. For example, staff lock away food which limits children's access to foods they may enjoy. Staff have not completed risk assessments to evidence their decision-making in relation to this practice. In addition, they have not completed direct work with children who may struggle with poor eating habits to support them to make healthier choices. Consequently, this impacts on the family-home ethos that the home is seeking to achieve.

The inspector identified that the manager's monitoring and reviewing systems are inadequate. The manager is not identifying the shortfalls in staff's practice and the quality of care provided to the children. The oversight of incidents is poor; and the manager does not take effective action where necessary to ensure that individualised plans for children are reviewed, updated, and monitored. In addition, the manager has not taken the necessary actions to address all the requirements from the previous inspection. This includes:

- Some staff have not completed the relevant qualification to work in a children's home within the required timescales.
- Some fire doors in the home do not meet fire regulations. This may increase the risk of a fire spreading. This was raised at the last full inspection.
- The manager has not ensured that the statement of purpose is updated in a timely manner to reflect staff changes. This means that the regulator is not provided with accurate information about the home.

These shortfalls affects the effectiveness of quality of care afforded to children.

The independent person's report is now more critical. This now provides a good analysis of the quality of care provided to the children and makes recommendations for the manager to make improvements to the home. The manager does not consistently action the recommendations, which impacts on the effectiveness of external monitoring systems.

The manager has now ensured that improvements have been made to the children's bedrooms. The bedrooms are decorated to the children's taste and feels more homely. As a result, children now enjoy spending time in their personal spaces.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/09/2021	Full	Requires improvement to be good
26/11/2019	Full	Good
19/11/2018	Full	Good
23/11/2017	Full	Outstanding

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
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans; and (Regulation 5 (c)) In particular, the manager should ensure that they escalate concerns with the local authority if they are not meeting their statutory duties to support children.	26 April 2022
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;	26 April 2022

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 manager 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. In addition, staff should ensure that when children present with challenging behaviours, they respond appropriately, while continuing to maintain positive relationships with children.	
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— help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; (Regulation 12 (1) (2) (a)(ii)(iii)(vi)) In particular, the manager should ensure that staff complete regular key-work sessions with children to help them understand their experiences and help reduce their risks.	26 May 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—	26 May 2022

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; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(v)) This requirement was issued at the last inspection and is restated as shortfalls have been evidenced in this inspection. In particular, staff and managers should ensure that they sufficiently manage risks to children who self-harm. Staff should ensure that they demonstrate professional curiosity when managing risks presented by children. In addition, the manager should ensure that there are effective lone-working risk assessments to support children and staff when their relationships are strained.	
*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; 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)) This requirement was issued at the last inspection and is restated as shortfalls have been evidenced in this inspection. In particular, the registered manager should ensure that they have systems in place to identify shortfalls in relation to poor	26 April 2022

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.	
The registered person must compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. The registered person must— notify HMCI of any revisions and send HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (1) (3)(b)) This requirement was issued at the last inspection and is restated as shortfalls have been evidenced in this inspection. In particular, leaders and managers should ensure that an up-to-date copy of the home's statement of purpose is shared with the regulator.	26 April 2022
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)) In particular, the manager should ensure that all fire doors meet fire regulations.	26 April 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	26 May 2022

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— 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 1 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)) This requirement was issued at the last inspection and is restated as shortfalls have been evidenced in this inspection. In particular, the manager should ensure that all staff working in the home have achieved the appropriate qualification within the required timescales.	
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—	26 April 2022

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 manager should ensure that agencies commissioned to employ agency staff carry out all the relevant checks to ensure their suitability to work with children.	
The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the name of the child; details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the name of the person who used the measure ("the user"), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure; within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within five days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record	26 April 2022

confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure.

(Regulation 35 (3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii) (b)(i)(ii) (c)(iv))

In particular, the manager should ensure that staff record a detailed account of physical restraints and that this meets regulatory requirements. The manager should ensure that their oversight identifies shortfalls in staff's practice.

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendation

- The registered persons should ensure that staff give children an appropriate degree of freedom and choice, specifically when this relates to children's access to food. Where a child's preferences are unreasonable or cannot be met due to safeguarding reasons, staff should discuss this with children to help them understand why. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the Quality Standards', page 17 paragraph 3.21)

Information about this inspection

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full 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

Mazviita Makiyi, Social Care Inspector

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