

SC020545

Registered provider: Castle Homes Care Ltd

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 offers care for up to five young people, primarily those with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 23 to 24 November 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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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: 31 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None.

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is outstanding because:

- Young people enjoy being at the home and make significant progress in different aspects of their development, including education and emotional well-being.
- Relationships between staff and young people are exceptionally positive. Young people enjoy spending time with staff and can talk to staff about issues in their lives.
- Staff diligently support young people to develop independence skills.
- Staff continually support young people's development through well-considered care planning.
- Young people's safety is paramount. Staff have an excellent understanding of the risks associated with each young person and how to respond effectively to these.
- From the point at which young people are admitted to this home, their risky behaviour, such as going missing from the home, reduces. When such incidents do occur, staff are tenacious in their efforts to locate young people and ensure their safe return.
- Managers and staff respond swiftly to safeguarding concerns.
- The manager has used an innovative approach, through the involvement of a local author, to raise young people's awareness of the dangers of sexual exploitation.
- Staff manage incidents of challenging behaviour very well.
- The staff team is resilient and members work extremely well together to provide young people with consistently high-quality care.
- The highly committed manager provides excellent leadership.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
31/01/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
10/05/2016	Full	Good
10/02/2016	Interim	Declined in effectiveness
29/09/2015	Full	Good

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Young people make exceptional progress from their starting points. All young people have lived at the home for over a year. Stability, consistency and excellent staff support help young people to achieve their potential. Young people enjoy living at the home and recognise the progress that they are making. One young person said, 'I have really loved being here; the social worker placing me here made the best decision. Here (sic) has turned my life around; without coming here I would have been in a secure unit and would be in so much trouble.'

All young people are very positive about the staff team. One young person identified a staff member with whom she has 'a real connection'. She said, 'I feel that I could talk to her about anything. She just knows how to listen.' Another young person talked about the manager, saying, 'She knows me best because we have gone through so much together, she has really stuck by me and I've never had that before.' Young people develop meaningful and trusting relationships with staff. Young people know that the staff care about them. As a result, young people's emotional well-being improves and they develop resilience.

Staff encourage young people to engage in regular activities. One young person is part of a community football team, while others regularly go to the gym and have gained swimming skills through weekly lessons. Young people enjoy spending time with staff. Young people exercise choice and this adds to their enjoyment. A young person said, 'It is good that we can choose to go out with different staff for things like the cinema, so we both know we'll enjoy it.'

Young people maintain contact with their families. Staff recognise the absolute importance of this to young people. The staff work hard to ensure that arrangements are well planned, safe and positive. A social worker told the inspector that staff are eager to make the contact with families as positive a time as possible, giving an example of a recent bowling trip when staff worked with a young person's brothers and sisters to help things go well. The social worker said, 'I was very impressed with the staff's enthusiasm for making sure that we were all able to look back at the experience as being a positive time.'

The staff promote healthy living, including regular exercise, smoking cessation programmes and visits to a range of medical professionals. Medication is administered safely. The manager has been tenacious in getting young people assessed where there have been concerns about their mental health. This tenacity has led to full health assessments being undertaken. Young people receive specialist support to help them to make sense of difficult experiences. For some young people, this is the first time that they have been able to examine such experiences and move forwards.

Young people make significant progress, given their starting points. For some young people, these include school refusal. All young people attend an educational placement daily and all but one of the young people attend full time. One young person attends school every morning, with staff supporting constructive activity in the afternoon. Staff have advocated for a change of school for this young person, as the school that he attends is not meeting his needs. He has been accepted at a new school and is due to start there in the new year. The registered manager is liaising with the placing authority and the school to finalise transition plans. When young people encounter difficulties and school placements break down, the staff identify alternatives. Staff are skilled in finding courses that are appropriate to young people's needs and interests. This helps young people to engage positively in learning. Young people develop aspirations for their future. For example, one young person wants to become a hairdresser. She is attending college and working towards achieving her ambition.

Young people enjoy a very pleasant and homely environment. Managers invest in the home. A new bathroom has been fitted and the home has been redecorated. Young people said, 'The home looks great. We are really posh here now.' Young people personalise their bedrooms, and these rooms reflect young people's interests and tastes. Staff help young people to look after their rooms, with rewards in place for those who find this a challenge. One young person who is preparing for independence praised staff, explaining, 'I know that keeping my space tidy will be a challenge when living on my own, so it's good that staff are helping me to get into good habits.'

Young people know how to complain and whom to turn to if they are unhappy. All concerns raised include outcomes that the young people view as positive. Staff seek young people's views consistently, and these views are acted upon. Regular house meetings all contain responses from the manager, agreeing actions such as day trips and rewards, or challenging young people when necessary. Key-working records show that staff have in-depth discussions with young people about key concerns and how they are moving forwards.

Young people are helped to develop independence skills. They are encouraged to spend time with friends during free time. Staff are diligent in making sure that, when young people want to stay overnight with friends, the arrangements are appropriate and safe. This promotes young people's safety while enabling them to enjoy ordinary childhood experiences. Budgeting, shopping and cooking are a regular part of some young people's plans. Young people enjoy creating meals with staff, and are proud of being able to cook for themselves.

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

Safeguarding young people is the highest priority for staff. Staff are keenly aware of the risks that young people face and take effective action to minimise these. For example, staff have helped young people to reduce self-injurious behaviour. Managers and staff regularly review and update young people's risk assessments. These contain detailed information including strategies to manage and reduce risk.

Young people feel safe and are safe. Managers and staff respond promptly to all safeguarding concerns. Records are detailed, and provide a clear account of the concern and the action taken in response. Managers communicate extremely well with the professionals involved so that required action is taken and the concern addressed. All staff have undertaken safeguarding training and senior staff have completed this at an advanced level. This enables them to successfully carry out their enhanced responsibilities.

Staff have been trained in identifying and preventing radicalisation and sexual exploitation, and in promoting e-safety. All these areas help to support the safety of young people. The manager has recently arranged for a local author to talk to the young people about their experiences of sexual exploitation. This innovative and impactful practice raised the young people's awareness of the potential risks and gave young people strategies for how to keep themselves safe.

Incidents of young people going missing from home have been significantly reduced. When such incidents do occur, the staff work tirelessly to search for young people and ensure their safe return to the home. When young people return, they have the opportunity to speak to someone independent about the reasons why they went missing and what happened during the time that they were away from the home. This promotes young people's safety and informs risk management plans. Managers and staff work collaboratively with partner agencies, including the police, to keep young people safe from harm.

Young people who used to self-harm do this far less. Tailored training for staff has equipped them with the skills and knowledge to respond effectively to such situations when they do happen. One staff member said, 'It is good to know what you need to do in such circumstances. You don't want to be freaked out; you need to be professional and be there for them.' Furthermore, staff provide young people with excellent support which promotes their emotional development and well-being.

Excellent behaviour management systems are in place to encourage positive behaviour and help staff to respond to challenging situations. Staff have high expectations of and aspirations for young people's behaviours. Effective use is made of sanctions and restraint, both of which are used only when necessary. Reflective discussions with young people and staff follow up all incidents of restraint and examine how they might have behaved differently to decrease the need to be held. The staff team has responded well to the recommendation made at the last inspection to increase the use of restorative approaches to negative behaviours. An inventive monitoring tool helps all staff to be aware of the triggers relating to behaviours, as well as the responses that have been effective and those that have been ineffectual.

During the inspection, no young people raised concerns regarding bullying behaviours. One stated, 'We sometimes get annoyed by each other, but we get on most of the time.'

Diligent recruitment practice ensures that all checks and references on new staff are undertaken and verified before a member of staff begins to work at the home. This

thorough response to recruitment helps to prevent unsuitable people from working with young people.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is led by a dedicated and suitably qualified registered manager. She has a strong awareness of the young people, their needs and how the staff are working to improve young people's lives. She keeps up to date with current research, attends conferences, and is involved in both receiving and giving training to her own staff team and others.

Highly effective monitoring systems help the manager and the staff team to be aware of how they are meeting the needs of the young people. Monthly monitoring by an independent visitor is rigorous and occasionally challenges the management team. This strong level of scrutiny contributes to the manager and staff maintaining high standards. All actions required from the previous inspection have been met. This shows that managers and staff are committed to continuously improving to achieve the best outcomes for young people. The manager has challenged other services to enhance the care provided to young people. This has included making sure that young people have the most appropriate education and receive therapeutic help.

Feedback from professionals is consistently positive. One social worker said, 'Staff are always available and always know what (the young person) has been up to when I call. He has settled down incredibly since he first came to the home. This is due to some really caring work being completed.' Communication to social workers is regular and effective. This helps staff to progress young people's care plans.

The manager and key workers are fully involved with care planning and reviews, ensuring that they fully understand young people's progress. Placement plans are linked to local authority care planning documents. Placement plans are detailed and give staff clear direction on the best ways to work with each young person. They are regularly reviewed and updated, and this keeps information fresh and accurate. Young people are a central part of the care planning and review process. One young person was very positive about a recent review, highlighting the involvement of her family: 'I felt really proud that my family could at last hear I was doing OK and they could be proud of me.'

The enthusiastic staff team supports young people extremely well. Staff have a wide range of expertise and experience, with an overarching expectation of sharing good practice. A good mix of gender and age within the team helps to respond to the diverse range of young people's needs. The team members work well together, with information being shared within monthly team meetings. The manager uses these meetings to challenge the staff about ways in which they can develop further.

Staff are very well supported and receive regular supervision. Regular supervision enables staff to reflect on their working practice and look at the best ways to work with young people. Similarly, annual appraisals are positive experiences, encouraging staff to evaluate their own performance. They are expected to take a shared responsibility for

identifying their own learning and training needs. Training needs identified in appraisals then link to the home's training plan so that common themes are responded to well.

New staff undertake a thorough induction programme. They are supported by a mentor, which new staff find helpful. All staff receive a wide range of training. There is an emphasis on face-to-face training rather than e-learning, and this is designed to increase interaction and allow questions to be asked and responded to. All staff undertake a series of mandatory training, as well as additional courses related to the specific needs of young people. The manager monitors this, so staff attend refresher courses to update their skills and knowledge.

The manager and deputy have an awareness of the need to keep appropriate authorities informed of any significant event. Reports are detailed, explaining what has happened and outlining the action taken in response to safeguard children and prevent a recurrence.

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 difference 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: SC020545

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Castle Homes Care Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Shelley Whiting

Registered manager: Lucy James

Inspector

Andrew Hewston, social care inspector

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