

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 provides care for up to five children who exhibit complex behaviours because of their childhood experiences. It was registered by Ofsted in December 1998.

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

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

Ofsted last visited this setting on 21 January 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 28 to 29 September 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
---	--

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
---	---------------------------------

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: 26 November 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/11/2019	Full	Good
19/11/2018	Full	Good
23/11/2017	Full	Outstanding
31/01/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

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

There are currently three children living in the home and they have lived in the home for a few years.

The registered manager does not always ensure that the physical environment of the home is maintained and monitored effectively. While some parts of the home are homely and maintained to a good standard, this is not consistently the case. At the time of the inspection, some areas of the home were damaged and had not been repaired, and there were several safety hazards identified by the inspectors. For example, a hosepipe was found in the garden area, which a child, who is known to use items to ligature, could have used. Furthermore, a cord was left in place in the laundry room of the home. This lack of oversight has the potential to compromise children's safety.

Usually, children have access to the living areas of the home, including their bedrooms. However, the doors are fitted with devices which mean that when activated, children have to ask staff to open a door. For example, the inspector heard a child asking for her bedroom door to be unlocked by staff. Also, staff have sometimes locked doors in the home when managing children's behaviour. Consequently, the home is not always a welcoming and homely environment for children.

Overall, staff develop positive relationships with children. The inspectors observed children sharing jokes and laughing when interacting with staff. However, one child stated that she is not always happy with the way she is treated by one member of staff. This has led to the child raising a complaint. The complaint was investigated by the responsible individual in line with the home's policy, and feedback was given to the child. The responsible individual is planning to share important learning and reflection from this with staff at the next team meeting. This means that staff are able to learn and develop their relationships with children.

Staff support children to attend school and engage positively with their learning. All children have good attendance and are making progress. Children were able to talk about their aspirations and interests with the inspectors. Staff work well with professionals, to overcome barriers to learning for children, and any issues are managed appropriately. This support allows children to make progress at school.

Staff support children to spend time with their families and people important to them. Also, they work well with children's families to overcome difficulties and areas of conflict. This ensures that important family time for children is maintained.

Staff ensure that children's health needs are met. For example, all children receive support from the home's therapist. Children spoke positively about the support they receive. As a result, children grow in confidence.

Staff carry out focused and specific work with children. For example, staff created flashcards to help one child to manage her emotions when experiencing difficulties during family time. Consequently, children are given opportunities to find ways of managing their behaviour to maintain relationships with important people in their lives.

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

Staff do not always assess risks effectively when working with children. For example, staff allowed one child to access unsupervised time with an unknown peer in the community. However, they failed to carry out routine safeguarding checks or attempt to speak to the peer's parents. Furthermore, there was no consultation with the child's placing authority. This meant that staff could not be assured that the peer did not pose a risk to the child. Consequently, on their return, the child made a very serious allegation, which is currently being investigated by the police. These safeguarding shortfalls left the child vulnerable and at risk of harm.

Staff do not always follow or apply strategies from children's risk assessments to safeguard children effectively. Following a significant incident with a child, a strategy meeting with the local authority was held. Actions were agreed to remove the child's access to unsupervised time in the community. However, staff failed to adequately follow the risk assessment and allowed the child unsupervised time in the community with her friends. Furthermore, the child was dropped off at the same venue as the significant incident which took place two days previously. This potentially left the child at further risk of harm.

Leaders have taken action to address concerns about staff's safeguarding practice. For example, an internal manager from the company has completed an investigation, and staff are to undertake further training. In addition, the responsible individual is to deliver a safeguarding workshop at the next team meeting. In contrast, during an investigation, leaders took the decision to allow a member of staff to continue to work with children. However, a risk assessment was not carried out or put in place to provide safeguarding assurances. This decision-making left the staff member in a position to make further decisions that could leave children at risk of harm.

Children's risk assessments do not always provide staff with clear guidance on how to keep children safe. For example, one child's internet-safety plan does not clearly identify which online resources the child is permitted to use. The risk assessment also contains information which is no longer up to date or relevant. This means that staff cannot always be clear on what strategies to use to keep children safe.

The registered manager has reviewed the home's location risk assessment. However, the mitigation of risk is not sufficiently detailed. Local risks posed by neighbouring children's homes have not been included. Therefore, the assessment of local risks to children is ineffective.

Following significant incidents, staff ensure that children are supported, in line with the home's child protection policy. For example, following an allegation made by a child, staff ensured that crucial intelligence and evidence was gathered, and the relevant external partners were notified immediately. These actions ensured that the immediate safety of the child was secured.

Overall, staff manage incidents involving children's self-injurious behaviour well. They ensure that they manage incidents sensitively. One child has been provided with a 'sooth box' to help support her emotional well-being. Also, night staff have been used when concerns have increased. These measures help to reassure the child and support her during times of distress.

Staff manage children's physically aggressive behaviour effectively. On occasions, staff have been required to use physical restraint to manage incidents with children. These measures were used as a last resort and to keep children safe. Furthermore, the manager has ensured that staff and children have been spoken to following every incident. As a result, staff and children are able to reflect and learn from their experiences.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

A suitably qualified and experienced manager leads the home. She was registered in August 2021.

The registered manager does not always ensure that monitoring and review systems consistently result in improvements to the home. For example, she had failed to identify hazards in the home environment, which could have a detrimental impact on children's safety. In addition, there have been delays in follow-up work to address concerns identified in the home's fire risk assessment. These shortfalls have the potential to have a negative impact on children's safety.

The registered manager does not always make changes to improve the quality of care received by children. For example, she had identified shortfalls in children's risk assessments. However, she has failed to make the necessary changes to improve the records. This means that staff are not given clear information to implement strategies effectively.

An independent person has carried out external monitoring of the home every month. While these are completed within timeframes, they do not fully focus on the areas needing development within the home, for example the overall physical environment and risk assessments. Consequently, the external monitoring systems do not improve the quality of care for children.

The registered manager does not consistently have oversight of significant incidents with children. For example, one child was physically restrained by staff during an incident and potentially sustained injuries. However, the registered manager was not fully aware of this and had not reviewed the debrief completed with the child and therefore this was not investigated. This lack of oversight means that important safeguarding information could be missed.

An up-to-date copy of the home's statement of purpose has not been submitted to Ofsted. This means that the regulator is not provided with accurate information about the home.

Staff training is up to date and relevant to the needs of children in the home. However, the registered manager has not ensured that all staff complete the required qualification within the required timescales to work in the home. This means that not all staff who care for children are trained or qualified to do this.

Leaders provide regular supervision to all staff. This is a supportive process which helps staff to develop their skills and understanding of the children's needs. Also, the manager ensures that staff receive opportunities to develop their learning. This improves the care that children receive.

The registered manager ensures that the home is suitably staffed. Staff work well together, and they have worked hard to cover gaps in the home's rota. In addition, staff remain working in the home and staff retention is good. As a result, children receive consistent care from staff who know and understand their needs.

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 quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child; enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(i)(ii)) This specifically relates to the condition of the home's environment. For example, many areas of the home require redecoration and repair work. Furthermore, devices that lock the doors are fitted to doors in the home, such as the lounge, games room and kitchen.	3 November 2021
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;	3 November 2021

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 specifically refers to staff's assessment of risk in relation to children accessing free time away from the home. It also relates to staff's understanding of risk assessments and their responsibilities for protecting children from harm.	
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 the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(d)) This relates to the maintenance of the home and the need to repair damage to the property. Staff should also ensure that hazards are identified and removed in order to safeguard children.	3 November 2021
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)(h)) This specifically relates to the registered manager's oversight of the home and shortfalls which have not been identified in relation to the home's environment, children's risk	3 November 2021

assessments and recording of incidents. Managers must also 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)) In particular, ensure that an up-to-date copy of the home's statement of purpose is shared with the regulator.	3 November 2021
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)) This relates to staff in the home who have not achieved the appropriate qualification within the required timescales.	3 November 2021
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. 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. (Regulation 44 (1) (5))	3 November 2021

In particular, the independent person's report must provide actions that the registered person may take to improve the quality of care received by children in the home.	
The registered person must review the appropriateness and suitability of the location of the premises used for the purposes of the children's home at least once in each calendar year taking into account the requirement in regulation 12(2)(c) (the protection of children standard). (Regulation 46 (1)) In particular, the home's location risk assessment must include all the risks to children based on the environment and the home's location.	3 November 2021

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 Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Sophie Nicholls

Registered manager: Adele Boffey

Inspectors

Dean Wilton, Social Care Inspector

Mazviita Makiyi, 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 2021