

SC020630

Registered provider: Castle Homes Care Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is registered to care for up to six children aged 11 to 18 years who have experienced childhood instability, resulting in trauma and associated complex behaviours.

There is a manager in post who intends to register with Ofsted.

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.

We last visited this setting on 4 February 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 March 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: 28 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/01/2020	Full	Good
06/03/2019	Interim	Improved effectiveness
11/09/2018	Full	Good
27/02/2018	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

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

The provider has not taken effective and prompt steps to appoint an appropriate permanent manager. The registered manager post is still vacant from February 2020. A new manager was recently appointed and plans to apply to become registered. Due to this shortfall, the judgement of leadership and management is inadequate. As this is a graded judgement, the overall experience and progress of children and young people and how well children and young people are helped and protected is therefore requires improvement to be good.

Since the monitoring inspection, one child experienced an unplanned move from the home. Another child returned to live with their family. After a period of no children living in the home, two children have moved in. They have received a child-friendly guide about the home that explains the complaints procedure, which is also discussed with children. However, one child still needs further support to understand how to make a complaint and how they will be supported through the process.

Managers do not implement an effective system to ensure that children's repeat medication entering the home is sufficiently recorded. On one occasion, staff administered a child an incorrect amount of medication. The manager took effective action to investigate this. However, recording systems still have the potential for further mistakes to occur.

The responsible individual identified that staff need to develop their knowledge and skills specific to therapeutic parenting. As a result, training is now planned to be completed by all staff. This will help staff to effectively support children's emotionally led behaviours that can be a challenge..

Staff support children to access routine health appointments and seek appropriate advice from medical professionals when they are feeling unwell. The organisation's therapist provides an opportunity for children to meet with them once a week. While it is too early to assess the effectiveness of this for one child who recently moved to the home, the other child makes good use of this time. One child's annual health plan has not yet been received. This has the potential for staff to not fully understand all children's health needs.

The new manager and staff understand the importance of building positive relationships with children who live in the home. One child spoke positively about the staff who care for her. Staff and children sit together for evening meals. This provides an opportunity for children to build trusting relationships with people who care for them.

One child has supported the new manager to develop a list of 101 things to do while you live at the home. Each month, staff support children to enjoy a wide range of

activities. This provides them with opportunities to try new things and enjoy themselves. Children benefit from social experiences that help to develop their independence.

Staff promote education and ensure that children receive support to attend school. Since living in the home, both children have returned to school following long periods of non-attendance. The new manager makes valuable contributions to children's education plans to ensure that their individual educational needs can be met. Plans agreed are achievable for the child. This child-centred practice helps children to make academic progress and gain skills that will support them to achieve future employment.

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

Recruitment practice is not consistently good. Monitoring of recruitment information by the previous manager was ineffective. For example, the checks completed on one applicant did not identify a gap in employment, therefore it remains unexplained. This practice has the potential for children to receive care from unsuitable staff.

The new manager and staff have a good understanding of children's emotional needs and behaviours that are complex to manage. The new manager ensures that children's plans support staff to recognise possible causes and behaviours that could indicate upset. Strategies are identified in plans to help staff to support children effectively. However, these plans are not always located in a place that can be easily found by all staff.

On the rare occasions that sanctions are used by staff to support children's behaviours, detailed records must be kept by staff. The new manager ensures that staff are consistent in implementing routines and boundaries. Staff promote positive behaviours through praise, incentive systems and positive rewards. This encourages children to feel safe and to develop socially acceptable behaviours.

On the rare occasion that restraint is used, it is used proportionately to any potential risk. All staff are trained in restraint methods. However, incident records do not provide a clear description of the physical techniques used. Children's well-being is checked following a restraint and they have the opportunity to speak about the incident. However, on some occasions, the managers do not ensure that staff have the opportunity to reflect. This may impede the manager's ability to monitor practice thoroughly and to inform care plans.

Staff identify safeguarding concerns effectively and managers work well with professionals to ensure that children are kept safe. For example, during the inspection, a member of staff raised with the manager some concerns that one child was experiencing. The manager responded promptly by sharing the concerns with the child's local authority, who agreed to review the risk. This positive safeguarding culture helps to keep children safe.

Staff encourage and support children to use their electronic devices and the internet safely. The manager consults with the child's social worker and people who are important to them to create a plan around this. These plans are kept under review. As a result, children are kept as safe as possible online while having the opportunity to use their devices independently.

There has been one allegation made against a person working in the home. The concern was taken seriously, and information was shared with relevant people, including the local authority designated officer. Appropriate measures were put in place to ensure the safety of children while the concern was investigated.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

There have been significant delays in the provider appointing a suitable manager. This means that a manager has not been registered with Ofsted since February 2020. The provider has appointed four managers during this period; three have left the organisation. This does not provide consistent management support. The judgement for the effectiveness of leaders and managers is therefore inadequate.

Managers' monitoring systems are not always effective. As a result, inspectors identified shortfalls that the previous and current manager had not identified. Recording is not always accurate. For example, one record was made by a member of staff who was not on duty at the time of the record and in another example, staff have made records and signed them as a different member of staff.

The previous manager did not ensure that staff receive regular supervision. The new manager is working hard to improve this situation and makes time to speak to staff outside supervision sessions. As a result, staff now feel supported by managers. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of staff absences, some staff have not recently received supervision within the organisation's expected timescales.

Due to staff vacancies, the provider has reduced the number of children who live in the home. New staff have started working in the home and the team now feels settled. Due to the pandemic, staff have been working additional hours to ensure that children are cared for by people they know. Recently, the manager has used consistent agency staff to support the rota.

Four staff hold a relevant qualification and two staff are working towards their qualification. Staff are supported by the new manager to attend additional training. This provides staff with skills to meet the needs of the children who live in the home.

The manager has a clear vision for the home and is developing her knowledge of the home's strengths and areas to be developed. She knows the children well and has high expectations for them. She advocates well on behalf of children to ensure that their plans support them to achieve targets that are realistic and help them to make progress.

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 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— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h)) In particular, ensure that monitoring systems are effective in improving practice.	12 April 2022
The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. (Regulation 23 (1)) In particular, the provider should ensure that there are effective systems in place to monitor that children's medication is kept at the correct temperature. It also relates to ensuring that records relating to medication stock and temperatures of where medication is kept are completed, and that details of new medication admitted to the home is added to the child's record in full and includes the expiry date.	12 April 2022
A person may only manage a children's home if— the person is of integrity and good character;	12 April 2022

having regard to the size of the home, its statement of purpose, and the number and needs (including any needs arising from any disability) of the children— the person has the appropriate experience, qualification and skills to manage the home effectively and lead the care of children; and the person is physically and mentally fit to manage the home. (Regulation 28 (1)(a)(b)(i)(ii)) In particular, the provider should ensure that it appoints a manager who is suitable to register with Ofsted without delay.	
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, recruitment practice should ensure that gaps in staff's education or employment are identified and explained prior to commencing work in the home.	12 April 2022
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—	12 April 2022

a description of the measure and its duration (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(iv)) In particular, the provider must ensure that the description of restraint techniques is sufficiently detailed to provide a clear explanation to the reader of the record.	
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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: SC020630

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: Post vacant

Inspector

Helen Malanaphy, Social Care Inspector

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