

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	30 June 2016
Unique reference number	SC020630
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Castle Homes Care Ltd
Registered provider address	80 Hammersmith Road, London W14 8UD

Responsible individual	Shelley Whiting
Registered manager	Dale Berry
Inspector	Andrew Hewston

Inspection date	30 June 2016
Previous inspection judgement	Improved effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	Outstanding
The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

SC020630

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- Young people grow in confidence and self-esteem and make exceptional progress in their personal, social and emotional development.
- Young people are consistently complimentary about the staff and the care that they receive. Relationships between staff and young people are unfailingly positive, supported by low staff turnover and a team that shows a genuine interest in young people's development.
- Staff place considerable time and energy on helping young people to make meaningful progress in their education. This includes being enthusiastic in encouraging good school attendance.
- Excellent support from therapeutic services play a key role in improving young people's health. A particular strength to these services is the focus on young people's emotional well-being.
- A wide range of systems supports young people's safety. They feel safe in the home and identify different individuals whom they would turn to at times of crisis. Staff are confident in implementing safeguarding procedures, including reporting processes.
- Well-considered behaviour management systems encourage positive behaviours, and include rewards that young people strive to achieve and are proud to accomplish.
- The registered manager shows a high awareness of the strengths of the staff team. A detailed development plan is in place to further improve the service.
- All professionals highlight the excellent sharing of information from the staff team and are appreciative of the positive way in which young people have developed. Staff are well supported and increase their expertise through regular supervision and well-organised training.
- The registered manager is highly motivated to learn from others. He explores and adopts learning from research to help improve safeguarding practice.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is part of a large private organisation. It offers care to two children primarily with emotional and behavioural difficulties within an age range from eight to 18. The home is set in a rural location.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
16 March 2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
22 July 2015	Full	Good
18 March 2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
12 November 2014	Full	Adequate

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	Outstanding
As a direct result of the exceptional care they receive, young people make excellent progress from their starting points in all areas of their development. Young people are exceptionally positive about the staff and the care that they provide. Young people also get on well with each other. The well-coordinated matching process helps this relationship to blossom. One young person said, 'I love it here. It is great. The staff are amazing.' Another young person stated, 'I really like it here. I wouldn't change anything.' Partner agencies share this view. One social worker stated, '[Young person] has a fantastic relationship with staff. It's absolutely amazing.' Another stated, '[Young person] consistently says he has no worries about the staff and can speak to any of them if he has a problem.' Staff work and care for young people in a warm, nurturing and friendly way. Young people respect staff and feel that staff are there to help them. A young person said, 'They have helped me out loads. I know they will keep me safe whether I am here, or on contact with my family.' Another young person said, 'The staff are really nice. They always try and help me.' An independent reviewing officer supported this, saying, 'The standard of care is excellent, as evidenced by [Young person]'s behaviour.' All young people, prior to living at the home, had a history of very poor school attendance, and a negative attitude towards learning. Staff highly value education. In doing so, they help young people to overcome barriers to learning. As a result, all now regularly attend school, make educational progress and are enthusiastic about their own learning. One young person has joined the school choir, is a member of the school council, and is the school's sports ambassador. This ambassador role involves going to other schools to promote sport. Feedback from a school about the home includes, 'we work hand in glove with the manager. It's wonderful, and we have really good relationships with staff, good communication and regular hand overs.' Another young person has completed a range of exams at the organisation's school, and has secured a place at college. During the summer period, the young person has been supported to obtain part-time employment in the local community. This is helping him to increase life skills that are vital for his transition to adulthood. Staff respond to young people's health needs consistently well. Young people access primary and specialist healthcare services to meet their needs. Diligent championing by staff of young people's needs has led to access of specialist services, including child and adolescent mental health services and family-group counselling. Excellent work is completed to help young people with their emotional	

health, including 'feelings logs' and daily discussions regarding their emotions, promoting introspective consideration of their situations and developing strategies to bolster their emotional well-being. Young people's emotional and physical health benefits because of this support.

The rural location of the home provides a tranquil and relaxed environment with young people being positive about the countryside. One young person said, 'I like the home and the fact that it is here. We have chickens and there are horses and sheep. It's great.' Another young person said, 'I am really going to miss it when I leave.' There is a homely and inviting feeling in the home, enabling young people to feel settled and comfortable. Pictures of young people adorn the walls, celebrating their achievements and special occasions. Bedrooms are personalised, and there has been a significant decrease in destructive behaviours, with young people now being proud of their rooms. This gives young people an increased sense of belonging and identity.

Staff actively seek young people's views on all aspects of the home, such as activities and menu planning. Recently, young people have chosen to have themed nights, including a Chinese and Italian night, and have independently researched the chosen country, using this information to decorate the home and to plan a meal with staff. Young people enjoyed these evenings immensely and are planning a Caribbean night. Young people, enthusiastically accompanied by staff, access a wide range of activities. These include swimming, paintballing, pamper days, and visits to the beach. During dinner, young people and staff spoke excitedly about a planned trip to London. Young people have made personalised, hand-made scrapbooks in which to keep records of these positive experiences. One young person enthusiastically showed how he had visited a television show production, meeting the television presenters and having his photo taken. All these opportunities equip young people with the skills, confidence and self-esteem to progress successfully through their childhood and in readiness for their adulthood.

Young people are encouraged to share their views about staff. A creative example is a display with young people assigning Disney characters to each member of staff. All have positive traits and reflect how the young people view the staff.

Staff promote young people's relationships with families well. The regular use of video phone calls overcomes issues when families live a long distance away, ensuring that young people are able to have regular contact with their families. Staff anticipate difficulties for young people, preparing them for contact and offering additional emotional support following contact. Staff are in tune with the needs of young people. Recently, staff responded to proposed changes to contact by advocating for the young person, resulting in contact arrangements remaining the same. This has allowed a young person to sustain their meaningful relationship with people who are important to them.

Staff are creative in planning for key-work sessions, using online resources and interactive materials, making them enjoyable and accessible for the young people. Staff use sessions effectively to support young people to develop strategies to

manage their emotions and independence skills, and to address risk-taking behaviour. One young person said, 'They have worked on my feelings. They help me talk about [my] emotions.' Another young person said, 'I like the [key-work] sessions. They are fun. I like sitting down with staff. They really help me.'

Staff encourage young people to develop independence skills that are appropriate to their age and understanding. Learning these is a key part of their residential experience, constantly being involved with their own washing and learning to cook, budget, and look after their own health.

Excellent arrangements are in place for young people during their admissions and discharges from the home. Thorough processes ensure that staff have all the information they need and young people receive meaningful information about the home either before they move in, or shortly after. Consideration is always given to making sure that young people's future placements are able to meet their needs, with social workers and parents being involved to secure a successful move.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Arrangements for supporting the safety of young people and promoting their welfare are good. Staff complete health and safety checks with diligence, including fire and utility checks. When checks raise concerns, staff take the appropriate action to ensure that the safety of young people and others is not compromised. Staff promote joint working and engage actively with partners and community agencies, such as the police. Staff use this partnership working to make sure that the location risk assessment stays up to date and reflects young people's vulnerabilities. Risk assessments help staff to identify risks and to carefully consider what action needs to be taken in the best interest of protecting young people. This helps to ensure that young people are protected from risk. The registered manager makes sure that the whole staff team understands the importance of safeguarding young people and the need for vigilance. When concerns are raised, the registered manager ensures that these are responded to swiftly, with detailed recorded chronologies of the incident. The registered manager places great emphasis on forming strong partnership working with the local authority designated officer for managing allegations against people who work with children to make certain safeguarding procedures stay rigorous and effective to protect vulnerable young people.	

Incidents of young people going missing from the home are low, with none since the last interim inspection. For one young person, this is a significant improvement on previous behaviours. Staff are knowledgeable about the procedures they should follow if a young person goes missing. A recent development of a 'grab bag', with equipment including a torch and fluorescent jacket, has been put in place to equip staff when carrying out immediate searches of the local area, supporting the safety of both the staff and young people.

The registered manager makes certain that procedures that respond to self-harm are strong, including risk assessments and guidance for staff regarding their responses. This holistic approach helps to promote all aspects of young people's well-being.

Positive behaviours are promoted consistently well, with young people being proud of rewards that they have achieved. An excellent system for both short-and long-term rewards has resulted in trips to the theatre, shows and beauty treatments. Young people decide on their rewards and are involved with how these can be achieved, through setting individualised targets that relate to areas that they wish to improve on. Records of sanctions and restraints show that they are used rarely. Individualised behaviour management plans advise staff on the best responses to challenging behaviours that young people may display. The manager ensures that plans are updated following incidents to keep them pertinent to the current needs of the young people. This again ensures that records are kept at a consistently high quality, in which the young person's welfare is a central feature.

Robust recruitment systems ensure that young people are protected. Managers make sure all checks are completed prior to staff working at the home, with additional references being asked for when staff have worked in a range of previous care placements. Good verification of references also helps to ensure that the organisation is fully aware of staff backgrounds.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
An enthusiastic and dedicated registered manager manages the home exceptionally well. He is qualified to level 5 diploma in leadership and management for residential childcare and is further developing his skills by examining a wide range of research regarding child sexual exploitation. This research has including linking with the local authority experts in this area and attending a conference relating to a recent police operation regarding exploitation. Staff are consistently complimentary about the leadership of the home and the way	

that they are supported in working at the home. One staff member said, 'I feel as though he has a really good idea of what I am about and knows what areas I need to develop and how this can be done.' The home is staffed to meet the needs of the young people, with a low level of change in the staffing structure which supports consistent practice and enhancing positive relationships.

Effective monitoring systems help to develop the service further. The manager has a very strong awareness of the running of the home and has differing evaluative tools that assess areas of strong practice and areas in need of development. The manager completes a six-monthly review that helps him to explore ways to drive forward ongoing improvement. This includes scrutinising reports and staff practice. He also ensures that young people, their families and social workers are all consulted. The independent visitor describes the home as, 'absolutely amazing... I think that the progress that young people make is remarkable.' Action points raised from visits are responded to swiftly, and the visitor states that these are predominantly suggested developmental points, rather than areas in need of correction.

Managers challenge effectively those working with the young people outside the home, ensuring that young people are well supported and receive a service that meets their needs. A professional stated that staff, 'will go into battle with social workers, but you can see that the needs of the young people are central to all of the discussions that they have.' This confidence of the manager means young people have a strong advocate in their life.

High quality care planning for young people drives their development. The home's care plans are regularly updated to respond to actions raised through the regular review process. Consequently, plans link well to the expectations of the placing authority and ensure that there is a consistent approach to young people's care. Young people are fully aware of what to do if they are unhappy with the service provided. Complaints information is in the young people's guide and on the notice boards. Complaints are rare, but when made, are swiftly responded to with full details of the investigation and feedback to young people. This shows that young people are listened to and that their views are important.

The registered manager makes sure that the statement of purpose describes the role of the home well and clearly identifies the way in which staff work with young people. All young people's admissions are in line with the criteria set out in the statement. Impact assessments completed prior to admission are detailed, ensuring that the young people are safe to be with others already in placement and that staff are able to meet their needs.

Staff receive a high level of support from their first day. They benefit from a highly effective induction that ensures they have the confidence in their work with young people. Thereafter, staff are supported to develop their skills to enhance their practice. Supervision sessions are diligently completed each month and include discussions about young people, staff's own responsibilities and ways in which their working practice could improve. Supervision links to detailed annual appraisals, in

which staff self-evaluate their practice, developing objectives with clear success criteria. These objectives link to the development plan for the home.

A well-organised training matrix ensures that all staff stay up to date with current practice and gain the necessary skills for working with young people. Staff have either completed, or are in the process of completing the level three diploma in residential childcare in the required period of 2 years. Staff are able to discuss how they have been involved with independent study to develop areas of specific interests in their role and are positive about the way that the manager informs them of all training courses available.

The home rarely needs to notify authorities of significant events, and only one has occurred since the last inspection. The notification was thorough and included all actions taken to support young people. Staff are fully aware of their responsibilities to share information for such events. This demonstrates staff have the necessary knowledge and skills to perform their work well.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of children looked after is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place. However, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or that result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference that adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service 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'.

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