

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	03/06/2015
Unique reference number	SC063895
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Castle Homes Care Limited
Registered person address	Castle Homes Care Ltd, The Manor House, High Street, Rothwell, KETTERING, Northamptonshire, NN14 6BQ

Responsible individual	Mr Lee Jones
Registered manager	Mrs Julie Wallhead
Inspector	Mrs Katarina Djordjevic

Inspection date	03/06/2015
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 are	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	Outstanding
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

SC063895

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- Young people receive an excellent standard of individualised care. They are very happy and settled and they feel safe.
- Staff have high aspirations for young people and do not 'give up' on them. Young people thrive in a nurturing environment and make significant progress given their starting points. Young people's aspirations change as they make very good progress and they know with support they can achieve their ambitions.
- Young people have sound and trusting relationships with staff. Relationships are based on mutual respect and positive reinforcement. Empowerment and enablement of young people are embedded in day-to-day practice and a real strength. As a result, young people feel valued and their self-esteem and confidence increase tremendously.
- The management of behaviour is a key strength. Young people are well supported and are successful in changing behaviours which have previously placed them and others at risk.
- Robust recruitment practices which also involve young people ensure the right person for the job is appointed and young people are protected from harm and abuse.
- The Registered Manager provides excellent leadership and direction and is committed to improving the lives of young people. The commitment to continuous improvement is part of the ethos and shines through day-to-day practice.
- Partnership working is a particular strength which ensures young people's holistic needs are met. Feedback from key partners confirms staff's commitment to collaborative working.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This privately operated home offers accommodation for up to four young people who may have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The Statement of Purpose indicates that the age range will be between 8 and 18 years of age.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/02/2015	CH - Interim	Improved Effectiveness
03/12/2014	CH - Full	Adequate
20/02/2014	CH - Interim	Satisfactory Progress
09/05/2013	CH - Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
Young people are very happy and settled. They enjoy each other's company and get on well together. They trust staff and thrive because staff are totally committed to enabling them to reach their full potential. A social worker commented that each time he sees the young person, 'he is absolutely content and his needs are met with respect'. Young people make very good progress in all areas of their lives given their starting points. They are even supported when they move into independent living which they appreciate; they visit the other young people in the home which helps to sustain their friendships. A young person commented: 'All staff at this home have supported me through everything. Also everyone within the home, including the young people, get along well like a family.' A young person's parent wrote, 'you have changed my child's life making it positive recovery...showing her she has the ability to do anything that she puts to challenge. We are so grateful for the company and their fantastic team.' Young people receive excellent individualised care and support. They are central to planning for their futures and this is reflected in their detailed placement plans, risk assessments and behaviour management plans. These records are reviewed and updated when necessary which helps to monitor progress and identify any areas of concern. Social workers receive copies of updated placement plans and risk assessments when they have been reviewed and monthly summary reports. This helps social workers to monitor that young people's needs are being appropriately met. A social worker commented that, 'Staff are proactive in sharing information with all professionals working with the young person. I am always kept up to date with the young person's progress.' Admission and transition/discharge procedures and practices are very good. Young people are central to the planning of the admission and discharge process. Their individualised needs, levels of understanding, previous histories and experiences and levels of risks are taken into account during this process. Staff work closely with relevant partner agencies to try to ensure a smooth transition for young people and lessen the impact on them at such important times of change in their lives. A social worker commented about a young person who has recently been admitted: 'He is settling well in his new environment. He is a valued member of the household. The unit has set appropriate routines and boundaries.' Staff have also	

successfully challenged placing authorities when last minute changes to young people's moving out plans have been made which would impact on the young person's emotional well-being. As a result, the original moving out plan was implemented which was the best outcome for the young person.

The promotion of healthy living is a high priority and young people become healthier. Staff work very closely with relevant agencies to ensure young people's holistic health needs are met. Examples include the child and adolescent mental health services and other specialist support services which help young people stop smoking, misusing drugs and alcohol. Young people learn about healthy living and learn to take responsibility for their health in preparation for independent living. Some young people have made exceptional progress in self-managing their particular medical needs, some of which are quite complex. As a result, the young person has become more emotionally resilient, and the young person has moved into independent living being confident they can manage their health needs; they know how to contact relevant health professionals for advice and support.

Young people's health and independence skills improve further as a result of healthy eating and working closely with the cook. This means they have food they like while at the same time ensuring they receive a varied and nutritional diet based on their individual needs including cultural and specific dietary needs. Young people are always full of praise for the cook and the quality of meals provided. Young people work with the cook in preparing meals and learning about nutrition and healthy diets. Some young people really enjoy cooking and are very good; they recently cooked the meals when the cook was on holiday. The young person volunteered to do this and was very pleased of the opportunities to use their skills and knowledge.

Education, training and employment are top priorities and staff work tenaciously to ensure young people are able to reach their full potential. Staff work closely with education provisions and attend all parents' and carers' evenings. They advocate on behalf of young people and challenge barriers if necessary. This ensures young people have equality of opportunity. As a result, young people's life chances improve considerably due to their exceptional progress in engaging in education and training. They receive education and training based on individualised needs and interests. Their attendance at schools and college is excellent. This is exceptional progress for some young people who were out of school for a long time before moving to the home. Young people studying for their GCSE examinations receive very good support and encouragement from staff; this includes support with revising for their examinations. One young person told the inspector which staff members helped them with different subjects. Young people

are proud of their achievements and they have brighter outlooks for their futures.

Empowerment of young people is embedded in the ethos and staff practice. Young people feel listened to which increases their self-esteem and confidence. There is a range of systems which enable young people to contribute to the running and development of the home. This includes young people's meetings, key work sessions, quality assurance questionnaires, and contributing to the development plan. The focus of young people's meetings has expanded since the last inspection. Young people take part in games and exercises about their individual aspirations and their achievements as well as learning about current affairs. They have enjoyed these games and their confidence in speaking in groups has also improved. Young people have recently started to attend part of the staff meetings.

Staff work tenaciously to support young people to maintain relationships with their families, friends and people who are important to them. Young people's increased independence has enabled them to make friends in the wider community and benefit from ordinary life experiences. For example, some young people have made friends in the local village and are able to go out with them regularly.

Staff are proactive in identifying resources and a range of opportunities based on each young person's needs and interests. Staff provide young people with new leisure activities and experiences which some young people may not normally have access to. Staff and young people share enjoyable experiences and join in a range of games, for example, hide and seek, football and other ball games. Some young people are now confident to go out on their own to their chosen activities. For example, a young person regularly goes ice-skating where they have made friends with other teenagers. Young people also contribute to the wider community by raising funds for charity. Staff and young people recently had a fancy dress event and raised £180 for a cancer charity. A young person is producing collages to raise money for charity.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
Safeguarding is at the forefront of practice. Young people live in a nurturing environment where they are able to develop skills and take controlled risks in	

preparation for adulthood. This is due to the skills of the staff team who effectively implement a range of safeguarding policies and procedures. Staff are clear about their responsibilities in reporting any child protection concerns and work collaboratively with partner agencies.

Young people contribute to their detailed placement plans, risk assessments and behaviour management plans which staff consistently implement. Records are regularly reviewed and updated when necessary, which helps to ensure young people receive care based on their current needs.

Young people feel safe and make very good progress in changing behaviours which have placed them at risk in the past, for example, substance misuse, self-harm and being part of gangs and at risk of sexual exploitation. Young people have gained confidence and now willingly share some of their previous experiences with their peers in the young people's meetings. This helps the younger people in the home to learn from their older peers. It is also testament to the staff that young people are now able to do this and demonstrates that young people do not fear being criticised or judged. A professional commented about how staff are, 'committed to my young person and have not given up when things get difficult'. Young people who have lived at the home for some time have improved their behaviours significantly. They have learnt how to keep themselves safe and take responsibility for their actions. This has resulted in them having more free time to go out and meet with friends and go on activities.

Young people's relationships with each other are very good. Some young people see each other as siblings. There is no bullying. Young people support each other, and the older members of the group present as positive role models for the younger people. Young people's meetings are used to discuss issues such as bullying and behaviours that place them at risk.

Young people know how to access the complaints procedure. However, this is rarely used as young people are able to raise any concerns they may have informally. They know that they will be listened to. Complaints are dealt with promptly and clear records are kept of actions taken and the outcome. The Registered Manager has introduced a new form, 'What you want Julie to know', which is readily available for young people to use. This gives them further opportunities to raise any concerns and make any positive comments. This can be particularly useful for the Registered Manager as a 'catch up' when she has been on leave. One young person requested that staff are paid more for their hard work!

Young people's behaviour improves significantly given their starting points. This is because the ethos is on positive reinforcement, recognising and rewarding good

behaviours. Restraint is not often used and records give clear details of the incident. Debriefs take place with both the young person and staff involved. Records are reviewed by the Registered Manager which helps to ensure practice is appropriate and safe.

Young people know they will not be judged for inappropriate behaviours but will be supported to learn from them. Key work sessions and young people's meetings are effective in helping young people to change their inappropriate and unsafe behaviours. Young people use a range of resources including books and games which help them with their emotional and behavioural development. For example, they work through different exercises which help to give them insight and understanding of their backgrounds and identities, and to look at their aims for the future. A social worker commented on how staff had 'stood by' a young person during a difficult period and were very creative in how they supported the young person with their behaviour.

Missing from home procedures are implemented effectively and in line with joint protocols. Staff follow and/or go out and look for young people and are usually successful in persuading young people to return. The number of incidents of going missing decreases significantly for all young people given their starting points; this improves their safety, including reducing the risk of child sexual exploitation and offending behaviours. This is because young people learn about the dangers they face when they go missing, they really enjoy living at the home, and they are able to discuss any concerns they may have with staff. Additionally, staff work collaboratively with the police, placing authorities and other professional bodies such as child sexual exploitation teams. Staff are proactive in instigating meetings with the relevant professionals to look at strategies to try and help young people to stop their risk-taking behaviours. Feedback from the police missing person's co-ordinator confirms there have been very few incidents of young people going missing this year, and the Registered Manager liaises with them regarding new admissions and when young people leave.

The management of health and safety is good which helps to keep young people and staff safe. Additionally, young people have access to a range of health and safety training which also helps them to prepare for independence, for example, food hygiene, fire safety awareness, first aid, health and safety and sexual exploitation.

Rigorous and robust recruitment practices help to protect young people from the risk of harm and abuse. All relevant checks are undertaken, applicants have a series of interviews, and young people take part in the recruitment of new staff.

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	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
The Registered Manager has worked at the home since 2009. She has many years' experience of working with young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, and has a Level 4 qualification in management. Her extensive experience, qualifications and commitment to her own professional development have equipped her to be an effective manager. The Statement of Purpose provides clear details of the services provided. Practice is in line with it. The young person's guide has recently been updated with contributions from a young person about their experiences at the home. Further improvements have been made to make young people feel welcome and give them useful information. For example, each young person's bedroom has a welcome guide, a health and safety guide, their placing authority's advocacy service details and complaints forms. The Registered Manager provides dynamic and motivational leadership and direction. She is clearly dedicated to improving the lives of young people and is ably supported by her deputy manager. They provide positive role models, promoting a culture of having high aspirations for young people and driving improvement. 'Standing still' is not an option and is evident in the day-to-day practice. An inclusive management style encourages shared ownership and staff development; staff feel listened to and valued. There is a clear sense of commitment to improve young people's lives and give them every possible opportunity to enjoy, realise and achieve their individual aspirations. Young people receive care from an experienced and well-trained staff team. Staff really enjoy their work and speak with pride about the young people. Young people know that staff care about them and that they want the best for them. Comments from a young person who has recently left reflect their appreciation, stating staff 'have helped me change my life around from being all shy to a well outspoken person, turning my health round..... I wouldn't be who I am and where I am if it wasn't for everyone at this home.'	

An effective development plan drives improvement. Staff and young people contribute to the development plan which is reviewed and updated regularly. A number of new initiatives and improvements have been made since the last inspection, which demonstrate the commitment of the staff to continual improvement. It also shows that young people actively contribute to developments. For example, young people have been central to improving the garden and creating an art room.

Robust quality assurance systems help to monitor young people's progress, staff practice and inform developments. The management team monitors records and staff practice. Quality questionnaires are given to young people and key stakeholders and their comments are noted and acted upon where appropriate. The range of internal quality assurance systems are further complemented by the monthly visits carried out by an independent person. The Registered Manager responds promptly to any shortfalls identified during these monthly visits.

Training and staff development are high priorities and are responsive to the needs of young people and staff. New staff receive a thorough and effective induction which helps to prepare them well for working as part of the team. They have a mentor who provides additional support including additional supervision. Feedback from new staff was very positive about the induction and support they have received from the management team and staff. Feedback is obtained from new staff about the quality of their induction which helps to improve the induction programme

Staff meetings are effective forums for discussing young people's needs, problem solving and staff training and development. For example, staff discussed the Statement of Purpose and they carried out exercises regarding the new quality standards and regulations.

Staff receive high quality supervision which helps to ensure they are working in line with young people's placement plans, understand and are able to effectively implement procedures, and identify developmental needs. One member of staff commented about their supervision: 'I feel that I am listened to and they are a great tool for my professional development.'

Staff have developed very good working relationships with other professionals and agencies. Consequently, young people get the best all-round support including accessing appropriate resources to meet their different needs. Feedback received from professionals was full of praise for how well staff communicated with them and how they advocated on young people's behalf.

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 looked after children 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 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 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 who 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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