

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	13/10/2015
Unique reference number	SC379357
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	Shelley Frances Whiting
Registered manager	Debra Leighton
Inspector	Ashley Hinson

Inspection date	13/10/2015
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	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC379357

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- The young people build relationships with a well-established staff team.
- Young people have access to independent advocates and visitors.
- The staff support young people with dignity and respect.
- The young people live in an environment they consider safe.
- The staff have responded well when young people have gone missing.
- There are strong relationships with external agencies.
- The staff recognise the achievements of young people and young people share these with pride.
- There have been very few physical interventions since the last inspection.
- The young people are able to maintain important relationships whilst in the care of the local authority as a result of the efforts of staff.
- The young people's access to the internet is restricted as a result of a blanket decision rather than individual assessments of risk and the staff do not support young people to understand e-safety.
- The staff have not updated key documents such as risk assessments, missing from care protocols and placement plans as promptly as they should after incidents have occurred.
- The staff do not complete bullying risk assessments, as outlined in the statement of purpose.
- There are some other areas for development such as improving the feedback to young people after young people's meetings, and staff being trained in mental health and self-harm.

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

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

Ensure that children are able to see the results of staff listening to their views and acting upon them, with particular regard to young people's meetings. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 22 paragraph 4.11)

Ensure that young people have access to a computer and the internet to support their education and learning, unless there are specific safeguarding reasons why this would be inappropriate. This includes opportunities for learning about their identity and cultural heritage. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 29 paragraph 5.19)

Ensure that the home follows its own procedures for risk assessing bullying incidents. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 39 paragraph 8.16)

Ensure that staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them, with particular regard to updating risk assessments and placement plans when incidents occur. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 42 paragraph 9.5)

Ensure that staff help children to understand how to protect themselves, feel protected and be protected from significant harm in relation to e-safety. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 43 paragraph 9.9)

Ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills to recognise and be alert for any signs that might indicate a child is in any way at risk of harm. The registered person should ensure that staff gain and refresh skills in safeguarding and record these in the homes workforce plan. This is with particular regard to the provision of training in mental health and self-harming. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 43 paragraph 9.12)

Ensure that the protocols for staff to follow when a child is missing from care or away from the home without permission are kept up to date. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 45 paragraph 9.28)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is part of a large private children's care organisation and is registered to accommodate three young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home offers short, long-term and emergency placements. The home has a school on site, and this is registered with the Department for Education.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/02/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
23/09/2014	Full	Good
20/03/2014	Interim	Good Progress
27/06/2013	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The young people are encouraged to build relationships with a well-established staff team. A social worker said: 'This has been a very stable placement and she has formed good attachments.' There has been limited staff turnover and staff know the young people well. The staff are interested in young people and engage them in discussions about their day to day experiences. An advocate said: 'I have been impressed with the work they have done and the relationship that they have. She has always been very happy there.' The young people are clearly able to articulate their concerns. They were open and forthright with staff and the inspector during the inspection. There is a laminated poster containing personalised information on how young people can comment or complain. This is good practice. However, young people voiced some doubts about whether staff would act on concerns raised. Records and discussions show that where young people have raised safeguarding concerns, the staff have acted upon these. Appropriate agencies have been informed and action taken. The young people have access to independent advocates and visitors. External agencies also meet with young people to offer support. These sessions are confidential. Where necessary advocates attend statutory reviews and support young people. Young people's meetings regularly take place. The young people participate in these. However, the outcomes of these are not always clear. As a result young people are not always clear on what has happened as a result. The young people attend the on-site school. On occasions they struggle to engage with the provision. The home and school work together on ways to overcome this. This includes making links with specialist educational support. Both young people were in school during the inspection. The staff support young people to attend a range of social and leisure activities. These include those linked to educational goals. If young people do not engage in education, they are restricted in the activities they can participate in. Where young people have expressed interest in faith based or cultural activities staff facilitate these. For example, attending a Mosque and linking with traveller history groups. The young people are encouraged to engage in age appropriate self-help skills. Staff expect young people to keep their rooms tidy and regularly monitor to ensure this is done. The young people are also involved in cooking activities. One young person who was refusing to engage in education was involved in life skills work by staff to ensure that she was participating in productive, personally beneficial activities. This included basic work on skills the young person will need in	

adulthood.

The staff register young people with health, dental and optical professionals. The service engages with mental health agencies when needed. The staff work with young people to encourage them to attend appointments. These are not always successful and young people have missed some health appointments including vaccinations. Staff have made efforts to resolve these, including creative attempts to engage young people. This increases the likelihood that young people who are resistant to engaging will participate.

Young people have arrived into the home on an emergency basis, with little advance planning. This is in line with the statement of purpose that allows emergency placements. The staff manage these transitions into the home well. Young people have also left the service quickly after incidents have occurred. The manager makes decisions about ending placements with the best interests of the children in mind, including those of the wider group.

The staff support young people with dignity and respect. They have an understanding of young people's cultural and ethnic backgrounds. For example, the home is supporting one young person to understand more about her travelling heritage and another young person to explore her ethnicity. However, the young people's access to the internet is limited to the extent that they cannot access sites that they have previously used to increase their own cultural knowledge. For example, accessing video sites to listen to music from a particular culture. They are also restricted from accessing other sites that their peers are likely to be able to access. This is a blanket policy and not based on individual assessments of risk. This means young people are limited in what they can access as a result of their looked after status. This makes them out as different from their peers and risks increasing social isolation.

The staff recognise the achievements of young people and young people share these with pride. During the inspection one young person proudly showed off a cake they had baked and a picture they had drawn. Another young person was particularly pleased with the school work they had completed. The home maintains a book of positives for young people. This reinforces the message that staff value the young people and encourages aspiration.

The staff promote contact with families. They regularly support one young person with Skype contact as her family are overseas. They facilitate contact with extended family members. This is subject to risk assessments and agreed with placing social workers. Work has taken place to enable contact with family members in prison. This involved work with the prison authorities to overcome potential issues. As a result the young people are able to maintain important relationships whilst in the care of the local authority as a direct result of staff support.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The young people live in an environment they consider safe. Young people placed in the home come with a history of having gone missing and of being at risk of child sexual exploitation. The service substantially mitigates these risks as a result of the one to one staffing levels that are in place. The young people have managed to go missing. These incidents were not the result of staffing failures and staff responded to the incidents appropriately and were proactive at chasing agencies to ensure all necessary actions had been taken. The home has worked with the police to manage incidents when young people have been missing. One police said: 'They are very easy to work with. There was a good response to the missing incident.' Another said: 'They are very good. One of the better homes we deal with.' Young people have missing protocols in place. However, the staff have not updated these after young people have been missing. As a result they do not contain up to date information relating to the young people and the level of risk. Although staff were fully aware of the incidents and the associated issues the absence of up to date protocols increases the likelihood of an ineffective response should young people go missing again. The staff support young people to manage their behaviour. There have been very few physical interventions since the last inspection. The manager monitors the records and offers feedback on how they can be improved, seeking clarification when necessary. Staff pursue young people's views as part of debriefs. The home attempts to implement restorative approaches to incidents. The staff make efforts to ensure that young people have the opportunity to make amends through positive behaviour and reduce the consequence. This helps the young people realise they can rectify mistakes. This reinforces the positive relationships witnessed between staff and young people. There have been incidents of bullying with two young people bullying a third. This was a potential contributory factor to the young person going missing. Case records and discussions show that staff do intervene when bullying arises. However, the home does not risk assess bullying incidents in line with the statement of purpose. As a result the staff may not have as full a picture as possible of the incidents. Staff recruitment is sufficiently robust. Appropriate checks take place. The service verifies references and explores gaps in employment. Where the staff or manager identifies safeguarding concerns about staff practice they share these with the appropriate people. There is a clear trail of evidence to support this. As a result the systems in place protect young people as far as reasonably possible from	

inappropriate staff.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
A registered, suitably qualified and permanent manager manages the home. She has been in post for two years. She manages with passion and enthusiasm. The manager makes timely notifications to the regulator regarding any serious events. The management style is relaxed. However, there is evidence to show that staff are made aware of professional boundaries. The manager takes robust action to address issues of concern arising in the home, including concerns from young people. Proper investigations are undertaken. A staff member said: 'I think it is very supportive. It has a relaxed atmosphere.' A well-established core group of staff are in place. New staff receive appropriate induction. Consequently young people benefit from a stable and generally consistent response. A social worker, referring to a young person who is moving on, said: 'She is in a better place and wants to change. She's ready to begin the next step.' The young people have a variety of plans and assessments on file. The manager has not ensured that these are up to date. Risk assessments are in place. However, the staff have not updated these after incidents that should have triggered an update. As a result some risk assessments contain out of date information. The placement plans are very detailed. However, these are also out of date. They contain handwritten notes and it is difficult to ascertain what is relevant and what is not. The staff who need to access these documents would not be clear about young people's needs and agreed responses if they relied on these alone. Feedback from professionals has been good. There is a strong link with the teacher at the attached school. The teacher said: 'I think we have built up a good understanding. They know how I feel about behaviour and education and what my expectations are. I am included in handovers. I get to say what I think and make suggestions. They act on those.' The home works closely with the police in relation to missing incidents and historic disclosures. The police said: 'They have been doing over and above what I would have expected of them to do to support the young person in the process.' The staff work with placing social workers to ensure young people's needs are met. One social worker said: 'They are able to provide support for her to open up and now she is ready for the next stage.' These positive relationships help to enable a joined up approach to meeting young people's needs. The manager and staff receive regular and effective supervision. This offers staff the chance to reflect on practice. A wide range of training is available for staff. The staff have received training in child protection, e safety and child sexual	

exploitation. However, some areas of training are missing such as mental health and sexual health despite these being key areas that the staff need to have knowledge in. As a result staff may lack knowledge in these key areas.

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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