

SC413078

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home is privately owned. It provides care and accommodation for two children.

Visit dates: 5 to 6 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 14 October 2019

Previous inspection judgement: Requires improvement to be good

Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for
- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings from the visit

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Children benefit from well-planned admissions to the home. Staff have been creative. They have made a video of the home which children can watch before visiting the home. This helps children to be informed and involved in their future placement.

When possible, children enjoy time as a solo placement before a new child joins the home. This helps children develop relationships with staff and enables them to settle and feel safe. Relationships between children and staff are positive. One child said staff are 'amazing'.

During the period of COVID-19, children have attended school. When children struggle to take part in education, staff support home learning. Staff work in partnership with schools to overcome obstacles to learning.

Staff encourage children to experience a range of activities. Children discover new talents and interests. Staff promote activities for health and leisure.

Some children have complex physical and mental health needs. Staff support children to attend medical examinations. They nurture and reassure children. This prepares children to undertake counselling to address past abuse and trauma.

The safety of children

Staff have been resilient in managing challenging behaviours. Experienced and well-trained staff keep children safe. Importantly, they teach children how to keep safe.

One child had a history of going missing from home. His behaviours continued. He would leave the home and evade staff. This led to incidents of him being classed as missing from home. Staff worked in line with agreed protocols. They communicated effectively with the police. This helped to locate the child and minimise potential risk of harm.

Physical interventions have been used as a last resort to keep children and staff safe. Records of incidents were unclear. This means it is difficult to know if restraints were safe. Interventions have been externally reviewed to ensure staff use restraint safely and effectively, but weak recording hampers the effectiveness of these reviews.

Safeguarding incidents are not always reported in line with regulatory requirements. This limits the ability of relevant professionals to monitor if children have been protected from potential harm.

Leaders and managers

This assurance visit did not review the requirements from the full inspection. These will be reviewed at a further inspection. Therefore, requirements from the last inspection have been carried over to the next inspection.

The registered manager has worked remotely during COVID-19. He has regular communication with the deputy manager. This provides day-to-day oversight of the home. But, the additional duties of the deputy manager mean that staff have not always had access to managerial support.

The operation of this home has improved. The responsible individual is providing leadership to the home. Internal systems and processes have been reviewed by the quality assurance team. Managers benefit from mentoring managerial colleagues. These processes support improvement.

Managers and staff are child-focused. They have a detailed understanding about the children, their needs and progress. Professionals report managers and staff work in partnership to promote children's outcomes.

There have been some changes in the staff team. Staff report that morale has improved and there is 'lots of laughter' in the home. There were no children in the house for a short time. This allowed the staff team to bond while redecorating the home.

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
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to develop and maintain effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children's home is to provide care and accommodation. (Regulation 5 (d))	11/11/2020
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	11/11/2020

necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; and 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))	
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; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; and understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(c)(f))	11/11/2020
The registered person must ensure that all employees— undertake appropriate continuing professional development; receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience; and have their performance and fitness to perform their roles appraised at least once every year. (Regulation 33 (1)(4)(a)(b)(c))	11/11/2020
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; are kept up to date; and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c))	11/11/2020
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).	11/11/2020

When conducting the review, the registered person must consult, and take into account the views of, each relevant person. (Regulation 46 (1)(2))	
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Recommendations

- Those with a leadership and/or management role should be visible and accessible to staff and able to deliver their leadership and/or management responsibilities. Any registered manager employed in the home should have sufficient capacity to ensure that the Quality Standards are met for each child in the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.7)
- The registered person should have a system in place so that all serious events are notified, within 24 hours, to the appropriate people. The system should cover the action that should be followed if the event arises at the weekend or on a public holiday. Notification must include details of the action taken by the home's staff in response to the event. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.13)
- Regulation 40(4) requires the registered person to notify Ofsted and other relevant persons if one of the situations specified in regulation 40(4)(a)-(d) occurs, or if there is an incident relating to the protection, safeguarding or welfare of a child living in the home which the registered person considers to be serious (40(4)(e)). ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.10)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC413078

Registered provider: Castle Homes Care Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Anthony Armstrong

Registered manager: Calvin Richardson

Inspector

Amanda Ellis, Social Care Inspector

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