

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	21/07/2015
Unique reference number	SC023736
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited
Registered person address	Ethelbert Specialist Homes, Cheesemans Farmhouse, Alland Grange Lane, Manston, RAMSGATE, CT12 5BZ

Responsible individual	Mr Leslie Davenport
Registered manager	Post Vacant
Inspector	Sophie Wood

Inspection date	21/07/2015
Previous inspection judgement	N/A
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	Requires improvement

SC023736

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- The new manager is quickly becoming established and providing good leadership. He already demonstrates a clear grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. He is confident in his abilities to challenge and implement necessary changes. The area manager worked tirelessly to bridge the management vacancy and has created a blank canvas for the new manager. This is an exciting time.
- Young people are increasingly more settled. Peer relationships have significantly improved since the last inspection. A calmer household results in happier young people.
- Recent improvements to the furnishing and décor have included the express views and opinions of the young people. This is on-going. Young people are developing a real sense of ownership about their home.
- Young people enjoy positive and respectful relationships with the staff. They understand their care plans and why things happen. Such ingredients promote positive outcomes. School attendance has risen, risky behaviours are decreasing and young people are more positively engaged in their day-to-day care.
- Shortfalls identified during this visit include staff induction and supervision processes, specific staff training needs, the variable quality of some staff guidance including risk assessments and the need to review the statement of purpose.

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets 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 with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
Ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction (Regulation 33 (1)(a))	30/10/2015
Keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it (Regulation 16 (3)(a))	30/10/2015
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard, with particular regard to the management of epilepsy, the registered person must: (2)(c) ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child.	30/10/2015

Recommendations

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

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. In particular, ensure that written risk assessments are supported with clear guidance and instruction for staff to implement, in order to minimise presenting risks. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 43, paragraph 9.12)

ensure systems are in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 61, paragraph 13.2)

ensure that staff have an understanding of how schools function, including the

processes of admissions to schools, the role of designated teachers for looked-after-children and the role of the Virtual School Head. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 27, paragraph 5.10)

ensure that staff strive to build positive relationships with children and develop a culture of openness and trust that encourages them to be able to tell someone if they have concerns or worries about their safety. In particular, provide staff members with direction and guidance about the key worker role. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 43, paragraph 9.11)

ensure a workforce plan includes the process for managing and improving poor performance. In particular, provide clarity on managers' use of staff probationary period. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 53, paragraph 10.8)

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is owned by a private organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to nine children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/03/2015	CH - Interim	sustained effectiveness
20/01/2015	CH - Full	Adequate
13/02/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress
11/09/2013	CH - Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
Young people have experienced a number of changes since the previous inspection. As a result of some young people moving on, a more settled and better matched group is benefiting from living in a calmer household. The new manager keenly encourages their sense of ownership about their home. This is helping the household to establish its new identity. Young people are becoming more settled. They speak about 'caring staff' and say, 'they listen to me and help me'. Their guidance clearly influences young peoples' decisions. They heed this trusted advice and make steady progress with regards to school attendance and their own behaviours. One young person eloquently captures his experience by telling inspectors, 'I used to be really naughty. I mean bad. But I'm really trying hard and I'm much better about school, my behaviour and that'. Young people understand why and how certain rules and expectations exist. Individual support plans are well thought-out. They make sense to young people and they choose to engage. One young person says, 'I have to go to school and not get into trouble. When you keep behaving well, you get rewards. I'm going to get a new scooter.' In recent months school attendance levels have risen, incidents of challenging behaviours have declined and young people are becoming more tolerant of one another. Strong links enable the staff team to communicate effectively with their education colleagues. Young people usually attend the organisation's separately registered school. In such instances, joined up approaches to behaviour management strategies, attendance and supporting the completion of homework are proving effective. However, the staff team currently lacks a wider understanding of the workings of the education system for looked-after-children and therefore, the ways in which they could be even more effective for all of the young people in their care. Young people receive the support they need to attend health and medical appointments. However, a significant gap in staff training, with particular regards to epilepsy, presents unacceptable risks and a requirement is made to address this shortfall. Young people are making better decisions about their health. Examples include their diets, exercise and lifestyle choices. One young person has requested help to quit smoking and all are becoming more interested in eating healthily. Staff members seek direction from appropriate partners, including therapists and health professionals. This enables them to understand young people's emotional	

difficulties and how best to support them. They fully appreciate the complexities of young peoples' pasts and how these affect their current relationships. Appropriate challenges are made to placing authorities about contact arrangements and decisions which negatively impact upon young people's emotional well-being.

Young people are appreciative of the improvements being made to the physical appearance and décor of their home. They are currently exploring ideas for the games room. Their views and ideas are valued and implemented. This culture results in very few formal complaints being made by young people. One young person says, 'I just tell staff if I'm unhappy about something and it gets sorted out.' Forums such as house meetings and individual key worker sessions seek to obtain young peoples' views but both are at risk of becoming repetitive in terms of their content. No recent review of these systems has been conducted to assess their value and impact.

Young people are encouraged to undertake activities which appeal to them. A culture of 'try it' is successfully engaging them to have a go at something new. An example, such as sea cadets sometimes works or the interest quickly wavers. Staff members say, 'it's having a go that counts. Eventually, everyone finds something they enjoy.' This approach nurtures enquiring minds to explore their wider surroundings.

Naturally occurring activities are used for young people to practise and enhance their self-help and independence skills. In line with their age, understanding and risk factors, young people cook, clean, travel independently and follow their own interests with appropriately reducing input from staff. One young person says, 'I'm not a kid and I like doing things for myself. It's good because the staff trust me not to do anything stupid.' Staff members understand the potential risks around such increased freedom and share these decisions and plans with placing social workers through regular updates and review meetings.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
Recent decisive action taken by senior managers has resulted in a better matched group of young people living together. Risks to their individual and collective safety have significantly reduced. Episodes of being missing and engaging in challenging behaviours are declining. This is a particularly notable achievement for one young person. The need to use physical restraint techniques has also declined as challenging behaviours have lessened. Young people say positive things about their feelings of safety and their sense of	

general well-being. They say, 'it's better here now. I get on with the other boys. They don't wind me up.' Another says, 'we don't have to always be with each other, it's good to have your own space.'

Relationships between young people and staff members are strong. Young people speak about individual staff members with warmth and affection. Such relationships are effectively utilised to engage and support individuals through the use of key working meetings and activities. Recent staffing constraints have adversely affected the frequency of these sessions and the written records do not always do justice to the quality and impact of this work. This risks good progress and positive outcomes going unnoticed.

Staff members effectively implement the home's prescribed safeguarding procedures. Such guidance is routinely reviewed to ensure it remains consistent with local authority and police policies and protocols. Three allegations against staff members have been promptly addressed and where necessary reported to the local authority designated officer. The home demonstrates transparency with its safeguarding partners in the interests of protecting children. The prompt use of suspension protects all concerned and allows rigorous investigation procedures to be implemented.

Individual risk assessments and behaviour management plans are not always clear. Some guidance includes vague language and ambiguous instructions. Examples include use of the internet and how to recognise the significance of behavioural changes. There is a risk of misinterpretation and therefore inconsistent delivery. This is exacerbated by the necessary use of various staff members from other homes within the organisation while a recruitment drive to fill current vacancies is on-going. Irregular and new staff members are not being provided with clear and succinct guidance in order to provide high levels of protection. This puts undue pressure on colleagues who do their utmost to bridge these gaps.

Permanent staff members recognise potential triggers for individuals which could result in unsafe behaviours. In describing one young person, a staff member says, 'you can predict that certain things will be really difficult for him to cope with, so it would be unfair to let it happen' and 'it's all about de-escalation; don't let things get to a point of no return. We are working to get him to think about his own responsibilities.' This approach demonstrates a thorough grasp of the home's ethos of good behaviour management and encouraging young people to keep safe.

Following the last inspection, damage caused to the property has been rectified. Young people live in a safe physical environment. Swift repairs and renewals of fixtures and fittings complement regular health and safety checks. Senior managers are driving the completion of locality risk assessments. These are conducted through liaison with key agencies, including members of the local safeguarding children board and the police. Thus, the wider, external risks to young peoples' safety and welfare are considered. This local intelligence helps the

home to find ways to reduce potential risks for young people.

Diligent recruitment checks serve to protect the young people from potentially unsafe adults. Senior managers are very receptive to dialogue and debate through the inspection process. An example includes the immediate action taken to further tighten reference verification procedures following one such discussion.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement
The manager has only recently been appointed. He has made application to be registered with Ofsted. The manager has suitable qualifications and experience. He is effectively drawing on his social work background and recent period of residential child care work to review the welfare and safeguarding practices of the home. Senior managers are welcoming his fresh perspectives and ideas to enhance and improve safeguarding arrangements. Prior to the new manager's appointment, the home was led by the area manager on an interim basis. Decisive action ended some placements. A calmer environment has been created. The absence of destructive and negative relationships between peers is largely responsible. Lessons have been learnt, particularly in relation to admissions and the need to limit disruptions and or sudden endings. Consequently, the organisation is reviewing its own admissions procedures to reduce the risks of poor matching occurring in the future. The new manager is explicitly clear that placement decisions for this home are his responsibility. The staff team are united in their approach to support the new manager. This is an exciting time for the home while it continues to develop. As changes to the staff team and admissions processes undergo transformation, a new and up-to-date statement of purpose is required to reliably inform potential placing authorities. Existing staff members possess the Level 3 Diploma in Children and Young People or are working towards it. They benefit from a company training programme which provides a good range and breadth of relevant topics. Safeguarding and child protection training is evolving in response to the changing landscape of risks to young people. Hence, more recent training focuses on child sexual exploitation, internet safety and the role of external safeguarding agencies. This wider thinking is not fully captured within staff supervision processes. Although regular, the content of supervision meetings is variable in terms of quality, direction and clarity of recording. This risks a lack of clear direction and under evaluation of staff members' performance. Their development is difficult to	

track and there is limited information to explicitly demonstrate the management of good and poor performance, including relevant use of the probationary period. It is therefore difficult for the home to examine its staffing strengths and weaknesses in order to take necessary improvement action.

New staff members undergo a dedicated and informative induction process but there is no distinction of the differing needs of staff. For example, there is nothing additional within the new manager's induction programme to demonstrate his additional responsibilities.

Monitoring systems are evolving. The independent visitor reports are successfully highlighting areas of good practice, as well as the need for improvements. The new manager is receiving clear guidance and instruction on his own monitoring role. He already recognises current strengths and weaknesses. He fully appreciates how robust monitoring systems will assist him in his role.

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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