

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	26/07/2016
Unique reference number	SC023736
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Ethelbert Specialist Homes Ltd
Registered provider address	Ethelbert Specialist Homes, Cheesemans Farmhouse, Alland Grange Lane, Manston, Ramsgate CT12 5BZ

Responsible individual	Leslie Davenport
Registered manager	Madison Jazz
Inspector	John Pledger

Inspection date	26/07/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC023736

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Staff are readily able to communicate warmth and acceptance to children with complex needs.
- Children feel safe and protected, and their views and feelings are carefully considered.
- Children receive care that is sensitive and comprehensive, like that of a good parent.
- Children profit from a competent and committed group of staff who are able to provide a safe, stable and consistent home environment.
- Children develop a sense of security and belonging, and make progress in key areas.
- Clear and steady leadership underpins a stable, child-centred approach to caring.

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):

- That the registered manager is actively involved in the recruitment of all staff and supports good employment practice. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.1)
- That the registered manager is fully involved at all stages of considering admissions to the home to ensure that it can respond effectively to the assessed needs of children and fully understand the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations and quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4)
- That the registered manager maintains strong leadership by being in full control of all aspects of running the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations and quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.4)
- That a culture of shared mealtimes is embedded in the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations and quality standards', page 15, paragraphs 3.7 and 3.8)

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 three children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. Currently, there are two children in the home and one young person. They are all male.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
21/07/2015	Full	Good
04/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
20/01/2015	Full	Adequate

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children living in the home are	Good
During this inspection, there was an emergency placement at the home which allowed close scrutiny of the admission practice and exposure to the moving in experience of a distressed child in difficult circumstances. A child of similar age and circumstances who had moved in two weeks previously was present in the home at the time. The third, older child was away on contact. Children who move into this home are received by a group of sensitive staff who proactively seek to be attuned to children's identified needs. Strong efforts are made to ensure that children experience a welcoming environment. They begin to form attachments and start developing a sense of belonging soon after they arrive. One child said, 'This is the best place that I have stayed at, so far.' The most recent moving in process was managed to a high standard, and both the child's identified needs and the likely impact on existing children were fully and properly considered. Plans, well communicated to staff, were swiftly in place to address these. Staff feel empowered and competent to meet the needs of children when they move into the home. This gives children a sense of feeling welcome and accepted. However, some less recent moving in practice has not been at the required level and has resulted in negative experiences for children, as well as for staff. The improved standards that have been set need to become embedded and maintained. The admissions procedures as set out in the statement of purpose need to be followed on every occasion. The home is maintained to a high standard, and the decor, furnishings and equipment contribute to the message that the children who come to live here are important and respected. The views and opinions of children are routinely canvassed in a meaningful way. Children have recently contributed to the revision of the children's guide for the home. They know how to make complaints, which are taken seriously by managers and staff, and procedures are followed properly. This makes children feel respected and important. Children who spend long periods at the home develop a sense of permanence and belonging. The challenges that this can bring to planned transitions out of the home are well managed by staff, who work closely with placing authorities. A	

recent transition out of the home involved staff members accompanying a child to his new placement and helping him to settle in. Young people who successfully move to increased independence maintain contact with the home, and staff continue to be interested in their progress and well-being.

Children make progress with their learning, and those who are disengaged from schooling are successfully re-introduced to formal education. A local authority social worker praised the home for the progress that one child made with his attitude towards getting an education.

Children are encouraged and supported to develop their interests, and one young person has designed and made pieces of furniture for his bedroom. Children are strongly encouraged to develop their sporting interests, such as football, and are enthusiastically supported by staff in doing so. This contributes to their self-confidence and self-esteem.

Staff support children effectively to maintain appropriate and enjoyable contact with their families in a planned and organised manner. They do this in partnership with placing authorities, and this contributes to plans to improve family relationships.

Following the last inspection there was a deterioration in the practice of daily shared mealtimes. This undermined cohesion in the home and provided opportunities for children to engage in unwanted behaviours. Although recently improved, the daily sharing of meals is not yet imbedded practice at the home.

The health needs of children are very important to staff, and relevant services are quickly accessed for routine health checks as well as when children require attention.

	Judgement grade
How well children are helped and protected	Good
The safety and well-being of children are highly prioritised. Potential risks and hazards in the home are well understood by staff, who are vigilant in keeping children safe. Comprehensive and relevant risk assessments inform staff about specific areas of vulnerability. Staff apply these plans to protect children. Risk management plans are regularly reviewed and adapted in response to changed circumstances and significant events. Potential hazards and risks in the wider local area are clearly assessed. The home's locality risk assessment reliably informs staff about how to keep children safe	

outside the home. Staff apply this knowledge, for example in deciding on levels of supervision when planning outings.

Children develop attachments to members of staff and say that they trust staff to keep them safe, and they feel free to talk to them when they are worried or scared. This makes them feel secure and protected.

Children are protected from child sexual exploitation and the hazards of the internet by staff, who have been trained in these areas and are aware of the risks. Internet safety policies are comprehensive and the staff apply these to keep children safe. Child sexual exploitation awareness is incorporated into key-working sessions, where appropriate. This helps to develop and reinforce safe internet use and to reduce vulnerability. Although the current risk is very low, staff are informed and alert to the signs of radicalisation.

Instances of children going missing from the home are rare but, when they happen, staff react quickly and follow procedures to minimise risks such as unnecessary delays in locating children. Return home interviews are arranged and risk assessments are successfully reviewed to reduce the risk of further episodes.

Staff work hard to understand the vulnerabilities and risk-raising behaviours of children before they move into the home. This helps to make plans that are most effective in protecting children when they move in.

The use of physical restraint interventions with children is only occasional, and staff are skilled in applying de-escalation strategies. When physical restraint is applied it is a last resort and proportionate to the situation. Post-restraint practice is sound. Children and staff are given the opportunity to reflect on the incident. This promotes the resolution of conflicts and helps to restore relationships between staff and children.

Children are protected from exposure to unsuitable staff by consistently careful recruitment procedures.

Children benefit from the good relationship between the home and the police and other professionals, who help to keep them safe. This also allows for restorative approaches to destructive behaviours and avoids unnecessary involvement of children in the criminal justice system.

Children are well protected from known health and safety risks within the home. Full health and safety procedures and provisions are in place, and the relevant checks are carried out and recorded in a timely manner.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
Since the previous inspection, children have benefited from the more stable and predictable home environment that has resulted from steady leadership and improved staff continuity. The permanent registered manager has become established in her role and effectively leads a competent group of staff who place the needs and progress of children at the heart of their practice. The registered manager is skilled and qualified, and has the experience required to lead and manage the home effectively. Leaders and managers are sensitive to feedback from stakeholders, as well as to significant incidents and changes that occur in the home. They monitor events closely, as well as the development of any significant trends in the quality of care. They respond quickly and meaningfully to address any concerns that arise. Continuous improvement in the quality of care is a focus, and plans are in place to achieve this in a systematic manner. The registered manager leads a group of staff who are focused on providing children with a positive life experience that includes making progress, feeling safe and cared for, and having fun. They do this in close and effective collaboration with parents, placing authorities, teachers and other stakeholders. An example of this is the close and responsive relationship that the home has established with the local general practice surgery and the immediacy with which they are able to secure necessary medical care for children. Sustained efforts are made to improve the appearance of the home and to ensure regular maintenance to the standards of a caring family home. Leaders and managers maintain effective and assertive working relationships with placing authorities and parents. They are able to elicit responses to inquiries and requests, and will communicate and challenge when children's best interests are being compromised or services are insufficient. The registered manager oversees a structure for regular and effective staff supervision that helps to sustain and motivate staff to provide children with continuous and good-quality care. All staff have already achieved the required level of training for their positions or are currently engaged in the process of acquiring this. Planned and comprehensive staff training stimulates and equips staff to provide children with effective and safe care, and helps to improve outcomes. Staff value this training and regard it as a necessary part of their role. One staff member said, 'The training is intense, but they do it for a good reason – you need it.'	

The registered manager has a long-term approach to maintaining a group of a staff who are competent to meet the needs of children and able to do this on a continuous basis. There are plans in place for the further development of staff that include assuming increased responsibility. This contributes to staff retention and motivation, as well as continuity of care for children. However, the registered manager is not routinely involved in all aspects of staff recruitment and this undermines effective workforce development.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children 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 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 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.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children 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 living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children. 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. 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 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 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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