

SC023737

Registered provider: Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A private organisation owns and operates this home for three children who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home currently accommodates girls only.

Inspection dates: 7 to 8 February 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 19 January 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: improved effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Staff listen to, and are respectful of, children's views. The manager found that one child really engaged in key work because she found it 'new to be listened to'.
- Children experience positive and nurturing relationships with staff, who they

stay in touch with when they have moved on from the home.

- A member of staff described the home as 'like a regular family home with paperwork!'
- Safeguarding is good.
- Leadership and management are strong, and the registered manager leads the home well.
- Children make good progress from their starting points.

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/01/2017	Interim	Improved effectiveness
30/08/2016	Full	Good
03/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
18/06/2015	Full	Requires improvement

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

Recommendations

- If children's homes are to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. Children's homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene etc.); however in doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', paragraph 3.9, page 15) Specifically, review the appropriateness of some documents on the noticeboard and signs on some doors, review the provision of reading materials in the home and ensure that the decor of one child's room includes sufficient furnishings and that window coverings ensure privacy.
- Ensure that the ethos of the home supports each child to learn, emphasising the value of reading for enjoyment. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', paragraph 5.18, page 29)
- Ensure that the home is suitably located so that children are effectively safeguarded and can access services to meet needs identified in their relevant plans (see regulations 12(2)(c)). Under regulation 46, the registered person should review the appropriateness and suitability of the location and premises of the home at least once a year. The review should include the identification of any risks and opportunities presented by the home's location and strategies for managing these. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', paragraph 15.1, page 64) Specifically, this refers to obtaining current information about risks in the area.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Most children experience stability in this placement following breakdowns in foster care or other residential placements. Since the last inspection, three children have moved on from the home and three have moved in. One child decided to leave suddenly after a long period of stability, giving staff little opportunity to prepare the child for her move. However, staff were able to mark the occasion at a later date. Managers ended another child's placement, as the staff were no longer able to meet her needs. However, staff helped the child to understand that this was in her best interests and this followed a long period of stability in the home. In the third case, a child returned to live with her family,

which is a very successful outcome.

The children currently living in the home are settled. Staff support pathway planning to help prepare children for the realities of adult life and becoming independent, including how to shop for the ingredients of a meal on a limited budget.

Children experience good-quality care. They said that they like living in the home. One child said, 'It's like a normal home here – I forget I'm living in a residential home.' Children enjoy warm and positive relationships with most staff. This is evident in how children stay in touch when they move on to live elsewhere. A member of staff said the team works 'with kindness and care'. Another said they 'love making a difference'.

Contact with family members improves for most children while living at the home. Staff support some children to stay for overnight visits with their families, or get in touch more frequently by phone. Where possible, staff invite families to join their children for birthdays and religious celebrations, such as Christmas. One child said she had experienced the best Christmas that she had ever had.

Staff support children to better understand their bodies and the effects that illicit substance misuse and smoking can have on their health. Although not ready to fully stop smoking, those who do smoke have cut down. Children are encouraged to take part in activities which have a positive effect on their health and build their self-confidence, for example boxing, long walks and football.

Children make good progress in attending school. Staff support children's wider learning, for example when children get part-time employment or carry out work experience. Staff help children to learn about healthy relationships and sexual health to improve their health, safety and emotional well-being.

Staff help children reflect on their behaviour and feelings. One child said, 'I have a really good relationship with my key worker and we have lots in common.' An independent reviewing officer said, 'I was very impressed with the support she is receiving. She has made a remarkable improvement in behaviour and overall presentation since moving to this placement.'

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Children feel secure within the boundaries staff set. Children respond well to praise and to the personalised rewards they receive, such as tickets for a concert or a beauty treatment. Staff talk a lot about the feelings behind behaviour and challenge children when their behaviour is unacceptable. Effective discussion and key work is central to improving children's behaviour and well-being. A member of staff said they 'point out negative behaviour and suggest alternatives'. An independent reviewing officer stated, 'The staff presented as open and honest, providing [the child] with firm, consistent boundaries, while providing a home environment in which she received warmth and positive regard.'

The organisation conducts thorough checks when employing new staff. Potential new staff experience two interviews and an observation in the home before appointment. This helps to ensure that they are the right people to work with children.

Staff practice in safeguarding children is good. They receive training in how to manage specific risks to the children, such as sexual exploitation and online grooming. The home has received no complaints since the last inspection. Incidents of bullying are rare. The dynamics between children are tense at times. However, there has only been one incident of bullying, which staff dealt with well.

For two children, incidences of going missing were high for a period of time before they moved on from the home. Another child has gone missing from the home only once, which is a considerable improvement to their frequent incidents of going missing in previous placements. Staff follow procedures by reporting children missing, following them and going out to search for them.

Managers requested that placing local authorities conduct independent return to home interviews after children returned from being missing. Placing authorities did not always complete this task. Considering the high risks to children, managers arranged for someone working within the company, but independent of the home, to conduct such interviews on behalf of the placing authority. Although not ideal, this arrangement provides some opportunity for staff to learn of any reasons why children go missing and how to reduce the risk.

Children said they feel safe in the home 'most of the time' or 'all of the time'. Some do not feel safe in the local area, with one saying, 'It's rough.' In other cases, it is because the environment is so different to where children have previously lived. All of the children live far from their home areas.

Leaders and managers have tried to update the home's location assessment but have received little information, for example, from the police. Consequently, staff do not have information on any current risks or threats in the local area which they can take into consideration regarding helping children to feel safe and protect themselves.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager leads her team well. Staff respect her leadership skills. One staff member said, 'The registered manager gives a lot of guidance.' She has appropriate levels of experience and is studying for a suitable management qualification later this year.

An area manager supports and supervises the registered manager. Both managers monitor what goes on in the home, as does an independent visitor who visits monthly. This helps to define the home's strengths and weaknesses and improve the quality of care. Areas explored include why children appear to like some staff more than others,

and looking at how to improve daily records. The further promotion of culture to help develop children's sense of identity is an area the manager would like to develop. The registered manager has taken action to meet the two recommendations made at the last inspection.

Staff have a strong focus on improving children's lives and show passion for their work. A social worker commented, 'Staff are dedicated and supportive.' The diverse staff team members bring useful skills and experience from their varied backgrounds and employment experiences, which benefits the children. For example, staff who have worked as chefs share their interest in food to encourage children to eat healthily and to explore new tastes and textures. A member of staff said, 'We feel a lot of pride in what we do.'

A member of staff described 'brilliant support and training' since joining the home. A useful induction process prepares new staff for their work. Some staff said the mandatory training can be repetitive but they appreciate the specific training which helps them work with individual children, such as managing allergies. Two of the staff have achieved a suitable level 3 qualification and the other three are working towards this.

Staff receive sufficient supervision and annual appraisal to support them in the role. One described supervision by the manager as 'very useful' to improve confidence in their practice. Staff discuss in great detail how best to support each child and explore possible reasons for any changes in behaviour. This helps the staff team work consistently with the children.

Education arrangements help children develop some skills, for example joining staff training in first aid in order to acquire a useful qualification. Staff support school staff to help children improve their achievements, for example by supervising online tuition and with very effective handovers. There are some books in the home, and staff provide a newspaper to encourage children to read and take an interest in current affairs. However, there could be further opportunities to encourage a love of reading, such as providing books or reading materials which children are likely to read.

The building is of a reasonable standard. The lounge is comfortable, and children enjoy relaxing there. However, signs on some doors and a few items on the noticeboard appear institutional. The company is building a new bathroom for the children. When this is complete, work to improve the existing bathroom will commence. Regular checks of the premises ensure that the building is a safe place for children. Managers promote fire safety through risk assessment and by involving children and staff in fire drills.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care

provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, 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'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC023737

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited

Registered provider address: 17 Leigh Road, Ramsgate, Kent CT12 5EU

Responsible individual: Leslie Davenport

Registered manager: Rebecca Wheeler

Inspector

Jacqueline Graves, social care regulatory inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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