

SC023737

Registered provider: Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home provides care for up to three children with social and emotional needs.

Two children were living at the home at the time of the inspection.

The registered manager is currently on long-term leave. The new interim home manager was appointed in November 2024 and has made an application with Ofsted to register.

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 December 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 20 March 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/03/2024	Full	Good
07/03/2023	Full	Good
14/02/2022	Full	Good
31/01/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff have an in-depth knowledge of the children's needs and their backgrounds. The individual uniqueness of each child living in the home is fully recognised, with staff tailoring the support provided to reflect this understanding.

Staff give careful thought to how they support children who move into the home. This includes meetings, telephone discussions and visual tools to aid introductions. One social worker praised the planning from staff to support a child to move in. They highlighted how the support that staff provided extended to significant others in the child's life. It is because of this thoughtfulness and attention to detail that children settle in and begin to form relationships quickly.

Two children have moved out of the home since the last inspection. Staff ensure a careful and planned approach when supporting children to move on from the home. This includes joint working with partner agencies to encourage positive endings for children. Some children who have moved on from the home have remained in touch with staff for some time afterwards. This is testament to the relationships children and staff develop with each other.

Children say they feel safe. They attribute this to both the home environment and the support they receive from staff. Children say the staff are helpful and that they feel confident to seek support from them whenever needed.

Staff consistently keep relevant partner agencies up to date. This sharing of information ensures relevant professionals have a clear understanding of what is happening for the children. This joint working promotes a coordinated approach to supporting and improving outcomes for the children.

Children regularly spend time with the people who are important to them. Staff support the children in both the practical and emotional elements surrounding family time. This helps the children to maintain meaningful relationships regardless of distance.

Staff help children to identify and be involved in hobbies and activities that reflect their individual interests. The children also attend a range of activities with staff. There is a strong focus on making positive memories in the home, with staff helping children to celebrate birthdays and special events.

Staff work closely with schools and education services. Staff have strong aspirations for the children and place an importance on learning. Staff advocate on children's behalf to ensure they receive services that both meet their needs and further their learning.

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

Staff are aware of risks for children. They take appropriate action to reduce these risks. The children have detailed individual risk assessments, which staff regularly review and update. These assessments guide staff on how to respond appropriately when safeguarding concerns arise, and they help mitigate risk for children.

Some children have, on occasion, gone missing from home. Staff take proactive measures to locate and support the children to return safely when this happens. Because of the relationships staff develop with them, the children often remain in contact during these times. This helps staff to understand immediate risks to the children's welfare and their whereabouts. Staff quickly follow the procedures around reporting and updating relevant professionals. On the child's return, staff provide opportunities for supportive discussions with them about why they have gone missing. Staff request that independent return home interviews are conducted by children's social workers to further try to understand how children can best be kept safe.

Staff consistently use de-escalation approaches when managing difficult situations in the home. Physical interventions are used only as a last resort by staff and when used, are proportionate. The manager maintains good management oversight of any physical intervention and ensures that supportive conversations are routinely held with children following any incidents.

Allegations against staff are rare. When allegations have been made, appropriate steps have been taken to alert safeguarding agencies. Children's concerns are listened to, and investigations undertaken are thorough. However, on one occasion, there was a lack of clarity about how a decision not to instigate an internal investigation had been reached.

The home is a comfortable and inviting place to live. Children have nice bedrooms and are proud of these. They are encouraged to individualise their rooms. However, some health and safety risks were not identified. For example, a suitably detailed risk assessment was not in place in respect of kitchen improvement works being undertaken. The unlocked basement contained various flammable items. As well as a fire risk, this presented potential hazards for children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The current registered manager is on extended leave. A new interim manager has been appointed and has applied to register with Ofsted.

The new manager has quickly established her role and built relationships with staff. They identify her to be a supportive and knowledgeable figure in the home. On the occasions when the manager is unavailable, staff feel well supported by senior managers. Staff speak positively of their work environment, and there is good morale among them.

The manager has, in a short time, established a good understanding of the children's backgrounds and care needs. Children name the manager as someone they can talk to about any concerns if needed.

Staff supervision is completed regularly and is of good quality. Other forums, such as child-focused discussions and staff meetings, are routinely attended. This provides staff with opportunities to reflect on significant events for children and agree on the best approaches to support them.

Staff complete a wide range of training to increase their understanding and develop their skills. This includes supplementary training provided to support specific needs of the children in the home.

Children are consulted on aspects of their care, and their views are given due consideration. Children's wishes and feelings are regularly gained through natural discussions, surveys and children's meetings. Their views influence the day-to-day care provided and wider decisions about the home.

Senior leaders ensure that safe recruitment practices are in place to safeguard children. New staff have a detailed induction and feel well supported during this time. However, on one occasion, a new staff member was left alone on site to care for a child. They said they felt confident to do this, and management support was available if required. However, this was during their early induction to the home, when the staff member had yet to gain a suitable understanding of both their role and the child's needs.

Systems are in place to ensure independent monitoring of the home. However, the reports provided from these visits do not always identify and drive improvement for 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, The 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
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 the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(d)) In particular, the manager should ensure safe storage of flammables and that effective risk assessments are in place for planned work undertaken in the home.	31 January 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure the home's record following any allegation against staff, provides a clear rationale to any decision reached not to investigate. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.14)
- The registered person should actively seek independent scrutiny of the home and make best use of information from independent and internal monitoring (including under regulations 44 and 45) to ensure continuous improvement. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- The registered person should ensure any staff member in a deputy or supervisory role, such as 'shift leader', has substantial relevant experience of working in a children's home and has successfully completed their induction to the home in which they are employed. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.21)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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: Alisia Whiteman

Inspectors

Kerry Howarth, Social Care Inspector
Joanna Heller, Regulatory Inspection Manager

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