

SC023737

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home provides care and accommodation for up to three children with emotional, behavioural and mild learning difficulties. Historically, the home has focused on providing care for girls.

The manager registered with Ofsted in September 2020.

Visit dates: 14 to 15 October 2020

Previous inspection date: 31 January 2019

Previous inspection judgement: 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

The children's relationships with staff have strengthened under the restrictions imposed due to COVID-19. The examination of records and discussions with staff show that the children's needs and vulnerabilities are very well understood, and that staff care greatly about the children's progress and well-being.

Children new to the home settle, and behaviours to test the care and commitment of staff diminish substantially. Some children settle quickly and soon develop feelings of belonging and attachment to staff.

Staff advocate strongly for the children and go to exceptional lengths to ensure that they receive the correct specialist healthcare when this is needed.

The children's education is taken very seriously, and staff go to great lengths to support the children's best possible engagement with their learning. Some children have emerged from lockdown and the summer holidays with a substantially improved attitude and application to their studies.

The children's continued contact with their families was prioritised when lockdown was imposed, and the relevant technologies were used to make this possible. Contact arrangements have been adjusted as restrictions have changed.

The safety of children

The children express trust in the registered manager and the staff. The safe and secure environment helps the children to express their anxieties, explore their origins, and start developing a clearer sense of themselves. They express their views, wishes and feelings because they feel safe to do so, and because the staff listen and are responsive.

Detailed assessments and plans provide staff with insight into the risks and vulnerabilities associated with each child. Staff use this clear guidance on how to minimise these and keep the children safe.

The staff will go to exceptional lengths to safeguard children when they place themselves at risk or when they might feel afraid or be in strange circumstances. This includes remaining with children continuously when they have needed to stay in hospital.

Leaders and managers

Leadership is strong, clear, insightful and engenders a culture of commitment and teamworking among the staff. They feel supported and respect and value the leadership provided by the registered manager.

Children's records and plans are of a high standard and are kept current. Liaison with external agencies is strong. Despite a range of challenges, staffing has been consistent, well monitored and maintained during this period.

The registered manager displays clear command over the day-to-day running of the home, and the progress and well-being of the children. However, regarding the application of regulation 45, opportunities are being missed to better understand the quality of care being provided and to apply this analysis to raising standards even further. The recommendation made at the last inspection in this regard is repeated.

The registered manager is well supported by senior managers in the wider organisation, who have responded to the challenges presented by COVID-19 in a decisive, positive and child-centred manner.

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

Recommendation

- The registered person is responsible for deciding what each (regulation 45) review should focus on, based on the specific circumstances of the home at that particular time and any areas of high risk to the children that the home is designed to care for, such as missing or exploitation. They will also consider what information or data recorded in the home will form part of the evidence base for their analysis and conclusions. There is no expectation that the registered person will review the home against every part of the Quality Standards every six months – registered persons should use their professional judgement to decide which factors to focus on. The review should enable the registered person to identify areas of strength and possible weakness in the home's care, which will be captured in the written report. The report should clearly identify any actions required for the next six months of delivery within the home and how those actions will be addressed. The whole review process and the resulting report should be used as a tool for continuous improvement in the home. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.4)

In particular, the registered person should include information from regulation 44 reports as part of the evidence base for their analysis and conclusions and ensure that this information adds value to the process of continuous improvement.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC023737

Registered provider: Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited

Registered provider address: Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited, 17 Leigh Road, Ramsgate, Kent CT12 5EU

Responsible individual: Leslie Davenport

Registered manager: Alisia Whiteman

Inspector

John Pledger, Social Care Inspector

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