

SC023737

Registered provider: Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This 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 maternity leave. The home has had two interim managers since the last inspection. The current manager has applied to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 June 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	inadequate
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	inadequate
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
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There are widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected, their welfare is not promoted and their care and experiences are poor.

Date of last inspection: 12 December 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/12/2024	Full	Good
20/03/2024	Full	Good
07/03/2023	Full	Good
14/02/2022	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Children are unhappy where they live and with much of the care that they receive. They do not wish to remain in the home, and they have communicated this to both staff and other professionals involved in their care planning.

Staff are not managing the dynamics between the children well enough and this has a negative impact on the children's well-being. They say that conflicts can escalate rapidly when the children are together. To address this issue, the current strategy involves separating the children as much as possible, with one child frequently spending time away from the home. This includes spending time with staff outside the home or at another of the organisation's homes. Although the child enjoys their time spent at the other home, and has fostered good relationships there, this strategy is having a negative impact on the child's sense of stability and belonging.

The extent to which children can make progress is limited due to the primary focus of staff being on crisis management. There has been a significant decline in one child's attendance at school since moving to the home. The school for this child has expressed concern over insufficient communication from staff and a lack of emphasis on the importance of regular attendance. Staff have made some attempts to promote home learning, but their approach has not been consistent. There has been poor collaboration between staff and external professionals to formulate long-term education plans for this child.

Children are supported to engage in activities and hobbies, both with and without staff. This means that they are kept occupied and spend time doing things that they enjoy. This includes going to the gym and the beach and having horse-riding lessons.

The staff are unclear about the implementation of strategies to encourage acceptable behaviour, resulting in inconsistency for the children. Staff say that they often find themselves reacting to recurring urgent incidents, rather than proactively addressing behavioural issues.

Notwithstanding the identified concerns, children have formed positive relationships with some of the core staff, who demonstrate genuine care and commitment to the children.

One child has moved out of the home since the last inspection. This was an unplanned move. Children's needs are considered ahead of them moving into the home and relevant documents and reports are considered to support decision-making. As a result, staff are supported in their understanding of the children's history and past experiences.

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

Children are not sufficiently safeguarded because of considerable shortfalls in the safeguarding measures designed to protect them. Repeat unsubstantiated allegations made by one child have resulted in a blanket approach taken to managing allegations made against staff members. In one instance, when an allegation was reported, no actions were taken to ensure the child's safety; the staff member remained on duty, and there was no investigation or referral made to the relevant safeguarding agencies.

The home environment is not safe for the children. The staff left the basement door unlocked, despite the basement containing various items that could pose potential risks to the children. Additionally, a child accessed the office using a key that should not have been in their possession.

There has been a notable rise in the use of physical interventions by staff in response to the children's behaviour. While this has been a proportionate measure to safeguard children from immediate harm, there have been missed opportunities to de-escalate situations before they reach the point when restraint is required. Although it is reported that supportive discussions occur with the children following any physical intervention, these conversations are not documented. The follow-up support from staff does not adequately provide the children with the option to seek medical attention.

Staff who are not trained to keep the children safe are left alone to care for the children. A new staff member, who was in their induction period, was noted to be providing one-to-one support to a child who was described by staff as presenting with 'unpredictable behaviour'. The staff member had yet to complete any mandatory training, including behaviour support and physical intervention, placing both the child and the staff member at potential risk of harm.

There has been a prominent rise in the number of occasions when children have been missing from the home, placing them at increased risk of harm. When children go missing, staff act quickly and proactively to locate the children and establish their whereabouts to support their safe return. Relevant professionals are promptly informed of any missing-from-home incidents, and independent discussions are routinely requested from the children's social workers to ensure their well-being.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Management oversight and scrutiny of the home are ineffective, resulting in the failure to identify and promptly rectify areas of concern.

Since the last inspection, there has been considerable staff turnover, resulting in a reliance on staff from other homes in the organisation for support. This reliance has led to inconsistencies in the care provided to the children, who have expressed uncertainty about which staff members will be present on any given day. Additionally, changes in management have led to further instability.

Staff morale has declined. The staff feel fatigued and somewhat powerless due to the extensive crisis management that they have faced in recent months. Management support has been insufficient, leading to inconsistencies and lack of clarity in managing and responding to children's behaviours.

Managers promptly review safeguarding incidents; however, the emphasis tends to be more on the children's behaviour rather than on staff practice. In one instance, a manager's review highlighted practice shortfalls, yet there was no evidence to indicate that the issue was addressed with the staff member involved. This left a gap in ensuring that lessons were learned.

Supervision and appraisals are not being conducted in accordance with the home's policy. Furthermore, when supervision does occur, the recording of these discussions is not completed or shared with staff.

There have been instances when managers have failed to provide complete information in notifications to Ofsted, with important facts sometimes not included. In one case, the notification omitted to mention that a child was in possession of a blade.

Some partner agencies express appreciation for the communication that they receive from the home's manager. One social worker spoke positively of the manager's commitment to promoting family time for a child.

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 home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm; that the premises used for the purposes of the home are located so that children are effectively safeguarded; 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)(b)(c)(d)) In particular, the manager must ensure that chemicals and hazardous items are secured out of children's reach. The manager must take every step needed to ensure that staff are vigilant and aware of the risks of children gaining access to staff keys.	20 June 2025
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out— how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home. The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes—	25 July 2025

details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure; within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (1)(a) (3)(a)(v)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(i)(c)) In particular, the manager must ensure that staff are clear on the approach to be taken to support appropriate behaviour from children in the home. The manager must ensure that supportive discussions and the offer of medical attention are routinely provided to children following any use of physical intervention.	
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy which— is intended to safeguard children accommodated in the children's home from abuse or neglect; and sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect. The procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect must, in particular— provide for the prompt referral of an allegation about current or ongoing abuse or neglect in relation to a child to the placing	1 August 2025

authority and, if different, the local authority in whose area the home is located; provide for the prompt referral of an allegation about past abuse or neglect in relation to a child to the placing authority and, if different, the local authority in whose area the alleged abuse or neglect occurred; provide for records to be kept of an allegation of abuse or neglect, and the action taken in response; describe the measures which may be necessary to protect children following an allegation of abuse or neglect. (Regulation 34 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(c)(d)(e)) In particular, the manager must ensure that all allegations are acted upon and when decisions are reached not to investigate, the rationale for this outcome should be clearly recorded.	
The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to achieve the child’s education and training targets, as recorded in the child’s relevant plans; support each child’s learning and development, including helping the child to develop independent study skills and, where appropriate, helping the child to complete independent study; understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers; help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment; maintain regular contact with each child’s education and training provider, including engaging with the provider and the placing authority to support the child’s education and training and to maximise the child’s achievement;	1 August 2025

help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or non-attendance and to return to school as soon as possible. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(vi)(viii))	
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)(e)(f)(g)(ii)(h))	1 August 2025
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust;	25 July 2025

an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— meet each child’s behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child’s relevant plans; help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; encourage each child to take responsibility for the child’s behaviour, in accordance with the child’s age and understanding; help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; communicate to each child expectations about the child’s behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child’s age and understanding; are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same; de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children; that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(x)(xi)(b))	
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. A notification made under this regulation—	11 July 2025

must include details of— the matter; the other persons, bodies or organisations (if any) who or which have been notified; and any actions taken by the registered person as a result of the matter. (Regulation 40 (4)(e) (5)(a)(i)(ii)(iii))	
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Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that any staff member in a deputy or supervisory role, such as shift leader, should have substantial relevant experience of working in a children's home and have successfully completed their induction for 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

Inspector

Kerry Howarth, Social Care Inspector

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