

SC023739

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

This privately operated children's home may accommodate up to three children. It is currently being used exclusively for girls who have a history of difficult attachments and require intensive support.

Visit dates: 1 to 2 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 27 September 2018

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 identified no serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

The children speak warmly and positively about the staff who care for them. The staff show care and affection for the children and are finely attuned to their wishes and feelings. The adults show pride in the progress of the children, and how they have maintained this, under the restrictions imposed by COVID-19.

The children express feelings of belonging and attachment to the home and to each other and are involved in the daily running of the home. The décor and embellishments in the home speak loudly and clearly of the children who live there.

The children are engaged in their learning and enjoy the stimulating and wide range of activities made available to them. They maintain good contact with their families, despite the restrictions of social distancing rules.

The relationships between the children and the staff have deepened during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the children engage with the staff around difficult topics. This helps the children to better understand the things that worry them and helps them to prepare for the future.

The safety of children

The staff have succeeded in maintaining consistent structure, routine and boundaries for the children, and this makes children feel valued, safe and secure. The positive relationships between the staff and the children help the children to respond positively to the directions of the staff and the boundaries that they set.

The staff are informed and insightful about the risks and vulnerabilities associated with each child. Clear plans support staff in keeping the children safe and to reduce risks where possible. The staff support the children to take risks that are appropriate to their abilities, and children become more able to keep themselves safe.

When children place themselves at risk, the staff take decisive action to safeguard them and are adept at engaging with other agencies to secure children's safety as quickly as possible.

The staff have succeeded in getting the children to understand the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic and to consistently apply the necessary safety and hygiene measures to protect themselves and others from infection.

Leaders and managers

The leadership of the home is strong, clear and passionate. The registered manager displays a comprehensive command of the children's care and progress and all aspects of the running of the home. She enjoys the confidence of both children and staff and has led a very positive and proactive response to the challenges of lockdown and other restrictive measures. The well-being and best possible progress

of the children have remained at the heart of all thinking and planning during this period.

There has been no compromise in leadership standards, and the registered manager has maintained key staff activities, such as regular staff meetings, child-focus meetings and individual staff supervision, despite the challenges posed by COVID-19. This has enabled sustained high levels of consistency and quality in the care of the children.

Staff display an enthusiasm and commitment to their roles and have developed a strong teamworking ethic. Under the leadership of the registered manager, the staff team has excelled in meeting the challenges posed by COVID-19. Staff have been creative, proactive and disciplined in providing structure and consistency for the children, while at the same time remaining focused on children's learning, as well as having fun and building positive memories. Regulation 45 monitoring by the registered manager is routinely completed. However, it is not always obvious that children and other stakeholders are sufficiently included, nor that the lessons learned, and areas identified for improvement, are clearly followed through.

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

Recommendations

- 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 6 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)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC023739

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: Lesley Dunne

Inspector:

John Pledger, Social Care Inspector

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