

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC023739
Inspector	Helen Lee
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited
Registered person address	Cheesemans Farmhouse Alland Grange Lane, Manston Ramsgate Kent CT12 5BZ
Responsible individual	Leslie Peter Davenport
Registered manager	Tracey Bowden / POST VACANT
Date of last inspection	30/01/2014

Inspection date	13/01/2015
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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This is a good home. Young people thrive in this personalised environment. Although there is not a Registered Manager in place at the current time, committed staff are strongly led and supported by the acting manager to give good quality care to young people. Young people benefit from personalised plans which focus on maximising positives. This helps create a home where they make good progress and achieve positive outcomes.

Staff have positive working relationships with young people, their families, partner agencies and the placing local authorities to ensure that clear plans and targets are set and progressed for all young people. This has led to a significant reduction in behavioural and missing from home concerns.

Relationships with staff and each other are positive. Young people feel very well listened to by the acting manager and all members of staff. Young people are able to influence how the home is run. A young person says that this 'is the most fun home, we had a great Christmas and holiday thanks to the staff.

Two requirements and five recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection. The requirements are related to the home's Statement of Purpose and consent for the independent person to undertake monitoring of the young people's

case files. The five recommendations relate to appointing a senior member of staff, reviewing the organisation training programme, ensuring visitors to the home are kept safe, clearly recording how reductions in concerning behaviours are managed and including the necessary contact information within the children's guide for the home.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is owned by a private organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for a maximum of three children, who may have emotional and behavioural difficulties. Children living in the home are able to access education through registered provision provided by the organisation. Therapy or counselling is also available to children if this is appropriate.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/01/2014	Interim	good progress
24/04/2013	Full	good
08/01/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
24/09/2012	Full	good

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

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
4 (2001)	ensure the home's written statement includes all the matters listed in Schedule 1 and in particular clear links to the young people's behaviours, the home's location and therapeutic input (Regulation 4 (1))	06/03/2015
33 (2001)	gain young people's and their placing authorities consent to the inspection of the young person's case records. (Regulation 33 (8) (a))	06/02/2015

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure staff are familiar with the home's emergency escape plan and in particular that they share this with any visitor's to the home to ensure their safety (NMS 10.9)
- ensure records identify any patterns or trends, in particular risk assessments highlight what interventions are effective and demonstrate that these are effective in reducing any occurrences, incidents or risks (NMS 21.2)
- make clear arrangements for a member of staff to deputise in the registered person's absence (NMS 17.4)
- ensure that the children's guide includes the young person's independent reviewing officer's, Children's Rights Director, and independent advocate's contact details (NMS 13.5)
- undertake an evaluation of the home's learning and development programme to ensure that it is effective. (NMS 18.2)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Individualised, caring support from staff allows young people to develop relationships and build their confidence and self-esteem. Key workers provide young people with opportunities to build on positive relationships with staff. Consequently, young people are gaining a more positive self-view, developing stronger emotional resilience resulting in improvements in their behaviour and interactions with others.

Young people who before arriving at the home engaged in risk taking behaviour harmful to their health, such as smoking, drug or alcohol use, no longer continue this. They now take an interest in learning about health conditions and taking some responsibility for managing their own health. They learn about healthy eating and understand the importance of a nutritious diet. As such, young people's general health improves as a result of living in the home. They access all the general medical services they need. They also access the specialist services they require, for example, to support their emotional health. As a social worker stated 'the home were completely flexible with the timescales regarding undertaking a psychological assessment which is now finished. This will enable me to assess any further assessments which may be needed as well as any work'.

Young people engage much more consistently with education. This is achieved through attending the organisation's independent schools where a personalised timetable, combined with the personalised care in home, has a positive impact by improving attendance and engagement. A head of education reports that the young people are having 'a very positive year so far'. Young people who have been at the home longest, have made measurable improvements in key areas such as reading levels to match their peers. A social worker stated 'the young persons has settled as well as hoped and the fact that they are accessing any education is a miracle'.

Staff encourage young people to be physically active. One young person was making plans to 'restart my running and gym visits now I am settled here'. Involvement in these types of activities broadens a young person's experiences, contributes to a healthy lifestyle, assists them to develop their social skills and contributes to their emotional well-being.

Young people benefit from staff support to maintain contact with their family and people who are important to them in line with their placement plans. New friendships are also encouraged with play dates supported by staff. Parents and social workers report that communication with staff is effective and staff keep them informed of daily events. One young person is proud that they 'can now talk to their mum unsupervised'.

Staff work effectively with placing authorities to ensure that appropriate

accommodation and outreach work is identified when young people are ready to move on. They support young people practically and emotionally to ensure that the move is undertaken at an appropriate pace for the young person. This ensures that they are fully supported at times of transition.

Quality of care

good

Relationships are supportive and good humoured and young people have access to all staff on a regular, informal basis. Key worker sessions are used constructively to assist young people who have difficulties in establishing and sustaining relationships and as a result, young people are making progress. A social worker commented that 'the observed relationship between the manager and the young person is the best and you can see that the home is working within the plan and the psychological recommendations'.

Comprehensive care plans identify young people's individual needs and the support they require to make progress. 24-hour management plans encompass all aspects of their care and their specific needs, with individual support strategies providing staff with guidance to assist young people effectively. Staff plan key working sessions to address young people's needs and link their targets specifically to their care plan to promote positive outcomes. This allows young people to be involved and aids their understanding of their development needs and their progress, thus promoting positive outcomes.

Mental health support through an in-house psychological assessment is provided within the timescales expected by the placing authority. All staff place a high value on education and promote regular attendance. This is acknowledged by professionals involved with the home. The Head of Education states: 'this is a fantastic home with good relationships. They are very accommodating with us and our ideas.' Staff ensure that there is a good routine in the home to support young people's attendance. They take young people to and from school and there is a system of communication between the home and the school at the start of and the end of each day. Regular meetings are held to resolve any difficulties. Staff recognise and celebrate all young people's successes and achievements. Consequently young people are able to engage with education and to make steady progress.

Young people confirm that they understand the complaints process but have not felt the need to use it due to the manager's open door policy. They participate in the young people's meetings having recently planned and prepared for the Christmas celebrations and festivities.

The home is well maintained, internally and externally, and is comfortably furnished. Young people live in a homely environment and atmosphere. There is sufficient space to allow young people to spend time together if they wish or to be private. The young people appreciate and gravitate towards the refurbished kitchen and dining

area. Young people personalise their rooms to meet their individual tastes. This gives them a sense of pride in their surroundings.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Young people say they 'feel safe' living in this home. Young people are not involved in any behaviour that places them at risk of significant harm or offending. This includes some young people who historically were. A social worker says the home are 'good at working with the young person's very challenging behaviour'. Management and staff understand the role of the push – pull factors and build up a wealth of aspects to keep the young people engaging with the home. There is a clear understanding that relationships are crucial to keeping young people safe.

Young people make good progress in learning how to manage their feelings, learning to talk about worries and reducing challenging behaviour. Care plans clearly identify risks and the protective factors for individual children and young people. The frequency of self-harming incidences is significantly reducing. However, the risk reduction plan lacks clear evaluation of the interventions taken and the effectiveness of these.

The home has developed its own children at risk of child sexual exploitation policy, which has clear links to the children going missing policy and vice versa. Staff work collaboratively with local statutory agencies, particularly the police, to ensure there is a free flow of information and that young people are kept safe and remain safe. Staff ensure that discussions include the exploration of the power and control in relationships and what a functional relationship looks like. This ensures that the young people have the knowledge to recognise abuse as well as the support to tell someone about it.

Young people generally do not place themselves at risk by going missing from the home. There has been only one incident of this with the current group of young people. Historically this had been a concern regarding the young people. Staff do have appropriate procedures to follow, tailored to each individual young person in the event of them going missing, in order to protect them. Young people have individual risk assessments that are highly detailed with clear safeguarding strategies. Young people are confident that staff would follow them and keep them in sight at all times.

Rewards and praise are used by staff to encourage good behaviour. This enables young people to develop more self-control and learn constructive ways of dealing with stressful situations and negative behaviour. Incentives to positively manage behaviour are reviewed and analysed by staff to establish which work better than others. This enables young people to fully understand the implications of their

behaviours and how they can also access rewards for positive change. As a result the most effective methods are adopted by all staff. This approach has a positive impact on behaviour management of young people resulting in very few sanctions being given. Additionally restraints are rarely used with a spike in November of eleven reducing to two in December. These are in line with legislative guidance and are recorded clearly and accurately.

Health and safety requirements are met. Fire risk assessments are complete. Checks of equipment are regularly carried out with regular fire alarm tests which are not always announced in advance. This ensures that young people and staff are aware of procedures and kept safe. However, staff are not advising visitors in accordance with the home's fire procedure to ensure their safety.

There are clear recruitment policies and procedures in place which have been followed. Written references received by the home in relation to prospective employees are checked verbally for their authenticity and any gaps in employment are discussed at the interview stage. These systems help to safeguard the welfare of young people.

Leadership and management

good

The Registered Manager post has been vacant since June 2014. An acting manager has been appointed since this time and is currently going through the process of application for registration with Ofsted. This manager has gained seven years of experience of working with children and young people and is currently enrolled on the Diploma Level 5. The home operates within an organisation which has a model of providing new managers with a mentor as well as an area manager to offer support.

The home is well organised. Team meetings are an important feature in the home. Staff routinely read any new documents and the minutes of meetings. This is an important contribution toward consistency of care. The acting manager monitors the services operation well and is fully aware of its strengths and frailties. Shortfalls are addressed promptly and clearly in practice, including those raised in complaints. Appropriate action has been taken to address recommendations from the previous inspection. Young people now consistently sign their key working session's records and are encouraged to add or amend comments.

Young people are provided with clear written information about what they may expect while they are living in the home. The guide does not include details of how they may contact the Children's Rights Director; also, the contact information for a young person's Independent Reviewing Officer is not included. The Statement of Purpose mentions that the home provides counselling therapy but insufficient details of this are included. Additionally, information is missing such as links to the home's location assessment and the types of children's behaviour the home can best meet the needs of. These shortfalls are being addressed by the service and do not affect

children's welfare.

The development plan for the home clearly outlines the areas for improvement and demonstrates the home's capacity for continual advancement, focusing on ways of improving young people's outcomes. The wider organisation's development objectives have a similar focus with the best interests of young people at the heart of planned and achievable targets. The recruitment of a senior worker remains outstanding and is required to ensure that there are clear arrangements for staff to deputise and ensure consistent structure and support for staff.

Young people receive support from a sufficient number of staff. Staff work together as a team to ensure good outcomes for young people. Staff say that the manager is approachable, flexible and supportive. Staff are working towards the necessary care qualifications. The provision of additional courses, workshops and e-learning opportunities further enhances their competency. An established programme addresses core training needs and more specialised knowledge. However, this training requires evaluating against the current young people's specific needs and behaviours.

Effective monitoring processes are in place to ensure the home continues to maintain high standards of care. Monthly monitoring visits take place regularly and they result in detailed reports highlighting any specific shortfalls. The visitor consults with young people, staff, professionals and parents to gain their views on the service. However, one child's file has been reviewed without the written consent of the placing authority.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.