

SC023739

Registered provider: Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and run by a private organisation. It provides care and accommodation for up to three young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 30 to 31 August 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 7 February 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Young people make good progress while living in the home because of their extremely positive relationships with staff. Young people benefit from a nurturing environment that provides thoughtful and individualised care.
- The registered manager is constantly striving to improve the quality of care and experiences for young people living in the home. Staff are enthusiastic in their roles and have high aspirations for the young people who they care for. All young people attend education, and this is helping to overcome significant gaps in their previous schooling. Creative approaches are used to ensure that young people enjoy both educational and rewarding activities.
- Young people approach staff with confidence and are comfortable in their company. Staff are proactive in keeping young people safe and fully understand each young person's risks and vulnerabilities. Staff are proactive in keeping young people safe, while allowing them to have the same experiences as their peers.
- The home is a welcoming environment with personalised touches, marking it as the young people's home. Photos are displayed in communal areas and an album on the coffee table provides a space for young people and staff to jot their memories of fun times that they have had as a group.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The records of young people's meetings do not show what action has been taken in response to their views or ideas, despite them usually being adopted in practice. There is no record to show how it is explained to young people if their ideas cannot be utilised.
- Young people's in-house care plans are generally comprehensive. However, they do not reflect young people's culture and identity beyond their ethnicity or religion.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/02/2017	Full	Good
26/04/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
18/08/2015	Full	Requires improvement
18/06/2015	Full	Inadequate

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

Recommendations

- Children should be supported to express themselves as individuals. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 17, paragraph 3.21.) In particular, use young people's in-house care plans to demonstrate their individuality and identity.
- The reasons for reaching any decision [not to implement a young person's suggestion from their meeting] will need to be carefully explained and understood by the child or children concerned. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.9)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people make good progress through supportive and nurturing relationships with staff. Young people see it as their home and staff ensure that the environment feels welcoming and like a family home. A photo album in the lounge includes space used for comments in which staff and young people note each other's successes, no matter how small, or remember a good time or funny comment made. Young people said that they liked this as it helps to think of good things.

Young people are respected as individuals and able to explore how they feel, dress and look. Young people feel safe expressing themselves through fashion choices and hair colours, exploring how they identify with adolescent subgroups and cultures. Young people are confident in voicing their views and opinions, in the knowledge that staff will listen to them and act in their best interests. While there is evidence that changes are implemented as a result, there is no clear evidence of how young people's views and ideas are considered and the response decided. In particular, when young people make a request that is unrealistic or against their best interests, the appraisal of this is not recorded. Young people know how to complain and who to complain to. When needed, independent visitors and advocates are available for young people, who have made good use of the service.

Young people attend education as planned, despite their previously being significant challenges or gaps in their schooling. The staff liaise effectively with the virtual school and education providers to make sure that young people's individual needs are met and that programmes are suitable for their needs. Staff identify barriers to learning and endeavour to reduce these to aid engagement. Young people say that staff attend meetings and help them with their education. Creative approaches to learning ensure that those who do not attend a formal school have a packed timetable of educational

and rewarding activities. Young people are encouraged to attend clubs and activities in the community, which for one young person in particular has led to forming strong friendships and a significant increase in her confidence.

Young people are supported to improve their practical and life skills in line with their age and needs. Staff recognise that despite chronological age, some young people may require closer parenting than others. Young people develop skills in how to form positive relationships and they learn to consider how their behaviour may affect others. Where appropriate, staff liaise with young people's therapists to understand what level they are functioning at and to then determine what support they may need both practically and emotionally to function independently.

Promotion of healthy lifestyles and emotional well-being is reflected in daily practice within the home. Young people have support to understand healthy diet, exercise and lifestyle choices through the organisation's health promotion worker. Young people have made good use of this, and access to the child looked after nurse, to consider their physical and emotional well-being and the impact of smoking, drugs and alcohol. Young people enter reduction and cessation programmes if needed. Meal planning is central to understanding what is healthy and young people are engaged in making meals for themselves and the group.

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

Young people's actions and demeanour show that they feel safe in their home and with staff. While some young people still struggle with visitors and meeting new people, staff constantly reassure them in these situations.

Staff are proactive in keeping young people safe. Staff have an acute awareness of each young person's risks and vulnerabilities, doing all that they can to protect them. Staff effectively apply knowledge from training into daily practice and show confidence in managing safeguarding and child protection issues.

Staff and managers have formed strong links with partner agencies charged with protecting young people. The manager attends multi-disciplinary meetings in relation to safeguarding in children's homes and is up to date on current and emerging issues locally and in the wider community. There is sound knowledge of the areas where young people may be at greater risk and intelligence has been shared with police and children's services regarding adults of concern in the local community.

Responses to young people being missing are robust. These include staff looking for them in known locations and following them when able. Staff have worked well with other children's homes in the local area when patterns have emerged of young people being missing together, and have identified other vulnerable young people to the police. Police have reprimanded adults in the community who encourage or enable young people to be missing with them or in their homes. There has been a creative response to a young person being missing with a male from a local children's home, including facilitating positive activities for them to do together in the community with the discreet

presence of staff and welcoming him into the home to spend agreed time together with the young person. Key-work sessions explore episodes of going missing and young people have the opportunity to meet with another member of staff from within the organisation but who is not directly related to the home. This has been useful in considering future approaches and responses to incidents of being missing.

Young people are able to take age-appropriate risks. Risk assessments are thoughtful, including noting that in some instances staff cannot fully mitigate the risk to the young person. Staff are aware that young people's lives are monitored and that taking some level of risk is typical adolescent behaviour, therefore staff equip young people with knowledge on how to keep safe and make more positive choices, rather than denying them all opportunities to learn by mistakes.

Young people say that on occasion there has been bullying in the home. However, young people are confident that staff also note any issues and have responded immediately to them. Staff spoke openly about the relationship difficulties due to the differing needs within the group, and are knowledgeable on what the likely difficulties are. Staff ensure that they are observing interactions at all times and challenge any issues directly, while educating young people about bullying and developing positive friendships.

The home deploys effective behaviour management. The staff team works consistently so that young people know what is expected of them. Responses to unwanted behaviour are fair, proportionate and restorative in their approach. Restraint is very rarely used, and when it is, usually as a guide away to another area. Staff have regular team meetings with therapeutic input to consider young people's behaviour and what it may be displaying. This leads to positive behaviour support plans with a focus on positive intervention and redirection.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is well run and managed by a highly competent registered manager. She is passionate in her role and is constantly striving to improve the quality of care and experiences for young people living in the home. She leads a small team of enthusiastic staff members, who have high aspirations for those they care for. The manager will often work shifts to support the staff and to be able to spend time with the young people. Staff feel well supported by the manager and say that they have the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge. Staff benefit from suitably challenging supervision sessions and have access to a wide range of training and development opportunities.

There are currently staff vacancies in the home, which are covered by use of the organisation's bank staff team. The manager is keen to only employ those she feels will complement the team and work within the statement of purpose ethos.

The registered manager is meticulous in her oversight and monitoring of the home. In addition to utilising reports produced by the independent visitor in line with Regulation 44 and three-monthly evaluations of the service, she also conducts weekly checks to

ensure that the home is running smoothly and meeting the needs of young people.

Young people's in-house plans are incredibly detailed and separated into key sections. They provide an overview of young people's experiences prior to their placement, and do not lose their history or heritage. Life story work is actively encouraged and memory boxes are continually added to throughout placement. Plans demonstrate young people's progress and areas that require further development. Staff add comments on to the plan which demonstrates that it is a genuinely fluid document, reflective of young people's experiences. A full review is conducted monthly, at which time any updates and progress are formally added. However, the plans do not fully detail individuality and identity beyond culture or religion, despite young people being actively encouraged to explore who they are.

Close liaison with social workers, education professionals and therapists, among others, ensures that placements and plans remain relevant, and that young people are receiving the care that they need. The manager is proactive in requesting reviews or meetings should she be concerned for a young person's safety or progress. All agreements and plans are made in the young person's interest and staff advocate well for young people, challenging other professionals effectively if they do not feel a young person is being listened to or is not receiving the help or support that they need.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC023739

Provision sub-type: Children's home

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(s)

Jennie Christopher: social care inspector

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