

SC023741

Registered provider: Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for a maximum of three children who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 16 to 17 May 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: 21 June 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: Good

Enforcement action since last inspection

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- The dedicated registered manager and his cohesive staff team are able to provide consistently warm and stable care for the children.
- Children who move into the home feel secure and develop a sense of belonging.

- The well-maintained and family-oriented home contributes to children's sense of belonging and of being valued.
- The steady and consistent approach of staff enables the children to increase their trust in adults and develop meaningful attachments.
- Children are able to make progress in key areas and become better able to reflect on their emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- The staff team has an expansive and ambitious approach to the well-being and development of children.

The children's home's areas for development:

- In order to further improve the quality of care, development is required in supervision practice, risk reduction planning and the registered manager's analysis of key information.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/06/2016	Full	Good
27/04/2016	Full	Inadequate
25/11/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
12/08/2015	Full	Requires improvement

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

Recommendations

- The registered manager must further develop the home's approach to risk management to include strategies that enable children to reduce risks and increase their understanding about how to protect themselves. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 43, paragraphs 9.9 and 9.10)
- The registered manager must continue to develop supervision practice in the home to improve consistency in addressing the key elements of this process. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.15 and page 61, paragraphs 13.1–13.4)
- When conducting the regulation 45 review, the registered manager must ensure that there is clear analysis of the information considered, that conclusions are drawn from this analysis and that this is used as a tool to plan for continuous improvement in the quality of care during the next review period. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.4)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The clear and consistent boundaries maintained in the home, coupled with the warm and caring approach of staff, enable the children to settle, and build trust in adults. Children form attachments and develop a sense of belonging.

Sustained thought and effort by the registered manager and staff have succeeded in achieving a physical environment for the home which radiates the feel of a well-cared-for and child-focused family home. A placing social worker said, 'What stood out for me when I first came was that it felt like a real family home.'

Children invest meaningfully in the running of the home and are appropriately involved in the thinking and planning around their safety and further development. They are encouraged to voice their opinions and are enthusiastic about participating in their reviews. This helps the children to engage with interventions and activities that are regarded as helpful in resolving their past issues and aiding their progress.

Children are helped to engage in their learning by staff who take a close interest in their progress and display good knowledge and understanding of the education system. The stability and consistency in the home also contribute to the children's capacity to apply

themselves in the classroom, and they all show significant progress in their education. Daily support to the children is further enhanced by the staff's close liaison with teaching staff.

The home successfully exploits the rich range of recreational and cultural activities in the immediate locality, and the children are engaged in regular activities such as sea cadets and community sports. This involvement promotes their social development, builds confidence and helps to prepare them for life beyond care.

Staff display a deeply thoughtful, caring and ambitious approach to the well-being and progress of the children. This results in highly individualised care planning and meticulous attention to the meeting of health and dietary needs. Staff demonstrate a determined approach in accessing specialist services, such as therapy, when required.

The children report quickly feeling welcome and part of the home when they move in. When they move on, they do so in a carefully planned and thoughtful manner. Staff are successful with these plans because they are able to work closely with placing authorities. During this inspection period, one child moved successfully back to the care of his family and into mainstream schooling.

The home values children experiencing positive and appropriate contact with significant members of their families. Staff exercise skill, vigilance and care in managing these arrangements. This helps the children to enjoy and benefit from these contacts.

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

The management and staff at the home display expertise and care in gathering information that helps them to understand the needs and hazards for the children before they move in. This enables staff to have plans in place to manage identified risks effectively from the start. They learn quickly from new incidents and adjust plans when necessary to keep the children safe. They anticipate circumstances that are likely to increase risk levels and proactively plan how the children will be supported to navigate safely through these situations of challenge, such as unexpected change, cancelled arrangements and separations.

These safeguarding practices help to keep the children emotionally and physically safe, and contribute to maintaining the home's positive safeguarding ethos. Individual risk management plans are explained to the children, and they are invited to sign these and make comments that they feel are relevant. This affirms their sense of being cared for and increases their insight into potential hazards. However, risk management plans fall short in some instances by not going on to describe strategies that will reduce specific risks for the children and do not detail what can be done to increase their capacity for self-protection.

The children say that they feel safe and protected by staff both inside and outside the home. Some are able to recognise that sometimes unwanted boundaries are necessary

to keep them safe. One child said, 'They can be strict sometimes but this is to keep us safe.' Each child was able to name more than one staff member who they would want to speak to if they were scared or worried about something.

Clear protocols and procedures are in place for each child in the event of them going missing. These include up-to-date individual profiles for information sharing with the police and other relevant parties. No children have gone missing from the home since the last inspection. This is reflective of children's positive levels of engagement, appropriate supervision and good staff planning.

Staff are trained and equipped to identify and respond to specialist areas of risk such as radicalisation, child sexual exploitation and use of the internet. The children's safe use of internet-enabled devices is managed in an individualised manner. Appropriate monitoring processes and agreements are in place for each child, according to their levels of responsibility and maturity. Staff display an awareness of the need to teach and support safe and responsible use of the internet, and the need to keep abreast of the ever-changing world of social media.

Physical interventions to prevent significant harm to self, others or property are applied to children with care. The recording of these incidents is of a consistently high standard and show that real efforts are made to encourage the children to reflect on incidents. This approach helps children to learn, and decreases the likelihood of repeating similar behaviours and their distressing consequences.

Safer recruitment guidance is applied in practice. This is enhanced by the children's meaningful contributions to the home's recruitment and selection process of new staff.

Safeguarding incidents are swiftly responded to, in accordance with prescribed procedures. The priorities are the well-being and safety of the children. This is demonstrated by a recent incident. Decisive and immediate action was taken and procedures were fully followed when a child made an allegation against a member of staff. The proper handling of this sensitive matter resulted in a prompt and clear outcome, revealing that the allegation was not substantiated. The integrity of the member of staff was maintained without compromise to the well-being of the child, and appropriate therapeutic follow-up is planned.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The key strength of the home is the strong and dedicated leadership of the registered manager and a supportive and motivated staff team who work closely together. This competent team feels emotionally sustained and supported, and is strongly committed to the children. These factors combine to provide consistent structure, appropriate boundaries and warm, supportive care to the children. Staff cohesion also contributes to the team's resilience in responding to the sometimes challenging behaviours of children in a consistent and considered manner.

Standards of administration in the home are high, and record-keeping is a strength. These factors enable the registered manager to maintain close monitoring of the quality of care being provided and the progress that the children are making. However, these strengths are not being adequately exploited by using the available data to increase the understanding of how practice and outcomes for children can be improved. The registered manager's regulation 45 reviews lack analysis, and this weakens his ability to produce targeted action plans for the next period.

The registered manager is highly responsive and open to external feedback. The recommendations made at the last inspection have been met. He shows an enthusiasm to learn, and to consider ways to improve the quality of care. The reports of the regulation 44 independent visitor, however, currently offer little challenge in this regard.

The registered manager and his staff team demonstrate a good understanding and knowledge of each child, as well as a strong sense of care and interest. This is reflected in highly individualised and focused care plans, and quick and sensitive responses to any significant incidents or developments.

The home's relationship and liaison with external agencies is close, effective and child focused. Where necessary, staff challenge other professionals. They are strong advocates for the children. Placing authorities and reviewing officers speak highly of the home. One placing social worker said, 'I am highly impressed with the staff's dedication, level of support, care and passion for (name of child). It was as if I was sitting with his parents who were advocating for him.' An independent reviewing officer, who has more than three years' experience of the home, reported, 'They are proactive and think ahead, show attention to detail, the kind of thing a parent would do.' Another placing social worker said, 'I get weekly feedback on how things have been going at school and home as well as incidents and how these have been managed. Their review reports are always received on time and are very thorough.'

The consistently good standard of care experienced by children is sustained through a range of support provided to staff. In addition to having a strong and supportive leader, staff are stimulated and supported by relevant training, regular team meetings, monthly group clinical supervision and regular individual supervision. However, the current model for supervision practice is not yet fully developed and lacks the structure that will ensure that supervision guidelines are consistently met.

For those staff who have not yet achieved the required qualifications, there are clear plans in place for this to happen, within the statutory timeframes. This includes the registered manager achieving his level 5 diploma.

The sense of belonging and progress that the children achieve is a tribute to the ongoing dedication of the registered manager and his staff team. A placing social worker commented, 'This is the only placement where (name of child) has told me that he is happy and said that he wished that I had brought him here earlier.'

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: SC023741

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited

Registered provider address: Ethelbert Specialist Homes, Cheesemans Farmhouse,
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Responsible individual: Leslie Davenport

Registered manager: Michael Atkins

Inspector(s)

John Pledger, social care inspector

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