

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	27 April 2016
Unique reference number	SC023741
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited
Registered person address	Ethelbert Specialist Homes, Cheesemans Farmhouse, Alland Grange Lane, Manston, Ramsgate CT12 5BZ

Responsible individual	Leslie Davenport
Registered manager	Post vacant
Inspectors	Anna Williams and John Pledger

Inspection date	27 April 2016
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Inadequate
There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Inadequate
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate

SC023741

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is inadequate because:

- Weaknesses in safeguarding arrangements leave children and young people at risk of harm.
- Despite policies, risk assessments and care plans stating that internet usage should be reasonably monitored, this has not happened. This leaves one young person at particular risk, as they bypass the home's parental blocks and have done so for several months.
- Oversight by the manager is not yet effective in safeguarding children and young people and improving their outcomes. The manager fails to effectively evaluate the quality of care provided for each child. A previous requirement linked to monitoring systems is repeated.
- Experiences for children and young people are mixed. Leaders and managers have failed to consider the impact of one young person on the lives of other children within the home. Staff members take different approaches in relation to how children and young people are treated. Staff fail to adequately challenge one young person who is not adhering to reasonable daily routines, while other children do.
- One young person's lack of school attendance over several months has impacted negatively on his learning and academic achievements.
- Staff members fail to ensure that all children attend required health and other appointments. One young person's diet is almost solely based on carbohydrates. This is detrimental to their physical and psychological well-being.
- Although children take part in a variety of activities, one young person is only interested in the internet and computer games. This young person often does not leave the home for several days at a time. Staff members' attempts to suggest different hobbies have failed.

The children's home strengths

- Contact arrangements are well promoted. This assists children who live a long way from home to maintain appropriate attachments.
- Recent improvements to the home, including a new bathroom, are of excellent quality and enhance the living environment.
- Children and young people recognise this as their home. They show a sense of belonging through personalising their bedrooms.

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

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 (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
8: The education standard In order to meet the education standard, the registered person must (2)(a)(viii) 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.	16 June 2016
9: The enjoyment and achievement standard In order to meet the enjoyment and achievement standard, the registered person must ensure that staff help each child to (2)(a)(ii) participate in activities that the child enjoys and which meet and expand the child's interests and preferences.	16 June 2016
10: The health and well-being standard In order to meet the health and well-being standard, the registered person must ensure that staff help each child to (2)(a)(i) achieve the health and well-being outcomes that are recorded in the child's relevant plans; (iii) take part in activities, and attend any appointments, for the purpose of meeting the child's health and well-being needs.	16 June 2016
11: The positive relationships standard In order to meet the positive relationships standard, the registered person must ensure that staff: (2)(a)(v) 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.	16 June 2016

12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard, the registered person must ensure that staff (2)(a)(i) assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; (2)(a)(ii) help each child to understand how to keep safe.	16 June 2016
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard, the registered person must (2)(a) 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; (2)(f) 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; (2)(h) use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home.	16 June 2016

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that children's homes are nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children. These will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9).

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three children with emotional and behavioural needs. It is run by a private provider.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25 November 2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
12 August 2015	Full	Requires improvement
26 February 2015	Full	Good
25 September 2014	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Inadequate
The manager and staff have been unable to meet the identified needs of all children and young people. The resulting inconsistency in practice has significantly impacted on the progress and experiences of one young person. Children are at risk of harm as a result of the staff's failure to address the identified concerns and behaviour. These serious failures in safeguarding practice and management oversight mean that children and young people are not fully protected. One young person is not motivated to achieve, attend school or engage in any academic learning. Unsuccessful strategies have not been reviewed or amended. This has a significant impact on his future learning and employment prospects. Children have full attendance at school and make progress academically. They go to homework club and eagerly complete work set by the school with staff. Staff promote physical activity as a regular part of life at the home. Swimming, dance classes, bike rides and walking locally are all examples of this. Some children make good use of these activities but staff have been unable to adapt their approaches when one young person has not engaged. This lack of physical activity impacts negatively on the young person's personal and psychological well-being. The health needs of children are identified but not always met. Routine medical appointments are attended by some, but not all. As a result, identified health actions remain unmet, such as urgent dental care, maintaining a balanced diet and routine vaccinations. This has a substantially negative impact on some children's and young people's development and growth. The quality of experiences in the home is mixed. Some children engage well with routines in place, such as weekly children's meetings. They influence menu choices, activities, request items for their bedrooms and speak freely about how they feel. This provides them with the opportunity to share their views regularly. Those children who attend feel listened to. Children and young people learn domestic tasks appropriate to their age and understanding. One young person has a pathway plan in place, but rarely engages in focused sessions and admits to not feeling prepared for leaving home yet. Children visit local shops, the library and leisure facilities such as the cinema. Trips take place to local attractions such as castles and skate parks. Since the previous inspection, one young person has withdrawn from most community-based	

activities, choosing to remain in the home. This has been for up to nine days at a time. Staff try unsuccessfully to encourage his participation in more varied activities.

Staff members suitably facilitate and support regular contact arrangements for all children and young people. This promotes their personal identify and helps to maintain strong attachments to those important to them.

Children and young people personalise their bedroom space with posters, toys, photos and belongings. Improvements to the building since the previous inspection include a new family bathroom. This has good quality fittings and has homely touches such as themed pictures and ornaments. The basement kitchen and dining area has been redecorated with a 'New York' theme. Children say that they like these improvements to their home. The games room is midway through a complete redecoration with colours which the children have picked themselves. However, the entrance hallway has carpet which has been significantly damaged and stained during incidents over recent months. Children and young people enter their home and see this damage every day. One child's bedroom has an unpleasant odour. This is unacceptable.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Inadequate
Inappropriate and ineffective responses to known and potential risks leave children and young people vulnerable to harm. One young person's increasingly worrying behaviour has not been sufficiently understood by staff. Therefore, responses are narrow and risk management strategies do not take into account the full range of hazards faced. A recent referral for additional targeted services has been made and not yet actioned. During this interim period, the manager has not taken action to reduce the risk-taking behaviours. Information regarding the welfare of children is shared with placing authorities that in turn make relevant external referrals. The manager attends multi-agency meetings and shares up-to-date information on children's behaviour with this wider network. However, for one young person, managers have failed to recognise broader and significant safeguarding risks from the young person's presenting behaviours. This is a serious failure in child protection practice. Children and young people have access to a computer which is located in a communal area. This computer is protected by parental blocks. Staff can reasonably monitor children's and young people's use of this machine. Although assessments identify the risks of unsupervised internet access, managers failed to	

take appropriate action when one young person circumvented the home's parental filters. This places this young person at risk of exposure to inappropriate adult material, online exploitation or radicalisation. This situation has pertained for at least four months. The impact of prolonged unfiltered and unmonitored access to the internet is significant. Managers admit that they do not routinely check on usage, despite placement plans, policies and risk assessments stating that this will happen. Children and young people are not kept safe or effectively supported by staff to understand how to access the internet safely. This does not prepare children and young people for modern life and adulthood.

Sanctions are reasonable and fair. Reward charts provide daily targets for children to work towards a financial reward. These charts are not effective for all the children and young people placed. Some children engage well and achieve high reward scores. For one young person, the reward system is not assisting them to modify and change their behaviour and improve their experiences. The expected routines for each child are set out in 24-hour management plans. However, these documents do not equip staff members with actions to take if a child is not following this aspirational daily plan. As a result, one young person follows their own daily routine which is currently detrimental to their health and well-being. Staff members do not challenge this behaviour and thus do not support the young person to return to a healthier lifestyle. Other children in the home follow their personal plans well. This creates an environment where staff respond to children and young people differently and impose different boundaries on behaviour. This is confusing for all.

Use of restraint is a last resort after de-escalation techniques have been attempted. Afterwards, children and staff members receive debriefs to reflect on and learn from incidents. Managerial oversight of records ensures that any hold is appropriate and proportionate. A previous requirement to ensure that debriefs take place within regulatory timescales is met. This ensures that children and young people have an opportunity to discuss incidents in a timely manner.

Recruitment practice meets regulatory requirements. There have been no instances of children going missing from the home. One child has gone missing from their school on two occasions. Staff search for children and work cooperatively with the school and local police to successfully locate them. Episodes of going missing are followed up with return interviews.

The home is physically safe because issues identified by sound health and safety routines are addressed. An in-house maintenance team provides both high-quality redecoration services, as well as swift responses to remove any identified hazard. However, specific shortfalls in the environment identified during this inspection have not been actioned by the manager.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate
Significant weaknesses exist in the leadership and management of this children's home. Monitoring systems focus on paper records. The manager fails to look beneath the recordings to consider whether the children's and young people's care plans are being achieved. The potential impact of one young person's behaviours upon younger children has not been prioritised. Despite weekly and monthly managerial oversight, serious safeguarding failures remain. The manager fails to effectively prioritise the needs of children and young people. The progress and experiences of one young person are extremely poor. Improving internal monitoring systems was a requirement at the previous inspection and is repeated. Between November 2015 and January 2016, an interim manager was in place. In January 2016, a permanent manager who has worked in this organisation since 2012 was appointed. He is undertaking the level 5 diploma in Leadership and Management for Residential Childcare. His application to become registered has been received by Ofsted. Staff members speak positively about the new manager and his management style. Staff feel supported by the new manager. One staff member commented, 'He is enthusiastic and full of energy and staff have responded to this. It rubs off.' The statement of purpose describes the ethos of the home. It states that therapeutic interventions and support from an in-house nurse are available. These services have not been used to help one young person. Neither has the staff team been supported to explore alternative strategies in working with children and young people who are hard to engage. The manager does not have a development plan which considers the strengths and areas of improvement needed in order to deliver the outcomes set out within the home's statement of purpose. Consequently, there is currently no clear direction for the team to follow to assist them in improving their team approach to provide consistent good-quality care. Supervision occurs monthly and is recorded. Team meetings occur fortnightly. Staff members discuss strategies and ways of working with children and young people who show challenging behaviours. However, this has not been effective in the team supporting one young person to change a pattern of behaviour that is now embedded and of detriment to the young person. The impact of one member of staff being seriously injured during an incident in November 2015 has not been fully explored with the staff team since the event. This may have affected staff's confidence in their ability to challenge inappropriate behaviour. One staff member commented that for one young person, boundaries have fallen away and 'it's gone on for so long now that it's difficult to change'. Feelings such as these have not	

been adequately addressed by managers in order to facilitate positive and lasting changes in practice.

Diploma level training is facilitated through a training centre run by the provider organisation. Leaders and managers ensure that all staff receive support to gain childcare diplomas. Further training opportunities are well promoted. Staff members have undertaken courses in 'cultural awareness and valuing diversity', 'health promotions' and 'working with children with challenging behaviour'. However, the direct impact and benefit of staff attending these courses has not been seen in practice during this inspection. Training on the organisation's 'Prevent' duty is planned for May 2016.

Recently implemented weekly telephone calls to parents and carers mean that they are kept informed of children's progress and achievements. Parents feel more in contact with their children as a result. Monthly reports are shared with placing social workers. These highlight key areas in children's lives and provide a summary of progress made.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place. However, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or that result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, 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 who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This 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 Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'.

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