

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC023743
Inspector	Jackie Line
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	Kieron Jones
Date of last inspection	11/02/2014

Inspection date	20/01/2015
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Previous inspection	satisfactory progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

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

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	adequate
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Since the last inspection the home has gone through a period of change. There is a new Registered Manager in post, and the home now accommodates younger children.

Between inspections concerns were raised about the impact of negative influences in the local area on young people living at the home. Young people were being drawn into anti-social behaviour and, at times, their safety and welfare was compromised. In response to this, young people moved on to alternative care placements, and the home changed its admissions criteria.

Since then the home has been on a journey of improvement. Children currently living in the home are benefiting from placement stability, and are making progress relative to their age, level of ability, and length of time at the home. Staff have a sound knowledge of the children they care for, and this helps them to meet their complex and diverse needs. Children benefit from positive relationships with staff, and they are supported to make better choices about their behaviour. Staff work well with parents and, consequently, children enjoy improved relationships with people who are important to them.

Nevertheless, there remain areas identified for improvement. These include: preparing children for moving into the home; education arrangements; sufficiently vetting all people who work in the home, and the monitoring of records. The manager has a reasonable understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the

home, and seeks to secure improvement. As a result four requirements and four recommendations have been made.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and operated 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 made available to children if this is appropriate.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/02/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
13/06/2013	Full	good
26/03/2013	Interim	good progress
03/07/2012	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
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of restraint, a written record is made which shall include and make clear the name of the person/s using the restraint, any witnesses, a description of the measure used, the duration of the restraint, and ensure that all children and staff involved in the restraint have the opportunity discuss the incident (Regulation 17B(3)(c)(e) (4)(a))	06/03/2015
18 (2001)	ensure the educational achievement of children accommodated in a children's home is promoted, in	06/03/2015

	particular children make use of educational facilities appropriate to their age, aptitude, needs, interests and potential (Regulation 18(1)(a))	
26 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed to work at the children's home have full and satisfactory information in relation to matters specified in schedule 2, in particular staff employed to provide home tutoring children (Regulation 26(3)(d))	06/03/2015
30 (2001)	ensure that all significant incidents listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 are notified to HMCI without delay. (Regulation 30(1))	06/03/2015

Recommendations

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

- ensure each home regularly reviews incidents of challenging behaviour, examines trends or issues emerging from this to enable staff to reflect and learn to inform future practice (NMS 3.21)
- ensure that physical restrictions on normal movement within the home are not used unless this is necessary to safeguard children and promote their welfare and development. Such measures are only used where agreed with the responsible authority and, if appropriate, parents. (NMS 10.4)
- ensure children are given information before arrival about the home and any information they may need or reasonably request about the placement, in a format appropriate to their age and understanding, including photographs, unless an emergency placement makes it impossible (NMS 11.3)
- ensure there is a system in place to monitor the quality and accuracy of record keeping and take action when needed, in particular ensure updated documents are co-signed by placing authority and parents where appropriate; and take action to ensure all required educational documentation is on children's files. (NMS 22.1).

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **adequate**

Children enjoy positive relationships with staff who are genuinely concerned for their wellbeing. As a result, children feel cared for and understand that staff are there to help and support them. This enables children to begin to develop trusting relationships with others.

Children are at different stages of individual growth and development. Some children have grown in confidence, and their levels of emotional resilience have significantly improved. An Independent Reviewing Officer commented, 'progress has been excellent, and staff have really helped to turn him around.' For other children, securing positive outcomes in terms of building personal resilience and understanding of their situation is at an early stage. This is relative to their starting points, and length of time living at the home.

Prior to coming to the home children had sporadic school attendance. Children are now engaging more readily in education, and this is starting to have a positive impact on their learning. In addition, children are participating in homework, and this has led to further improvements; for example in their reading abilities.

Since the last inspection, not all young people have benefited from placement stability. Some young people have engaged in risky behaviours, for example high levels of missing from home and anti-social behaviour in the community. This resulted in unplanned endings for some young people. This has contributed to an adequate outcomes judgement.

Children experience generally good health, and they are fit and well. Routine health checks are all kept under review, and children are able to access primary health care as the need arises. They are also able to access specialist help in relation to individual needs. This ensures the positive promotion of their health and well-being.

Children participate in a range of activities. These include: walking; running; swimming; trips to the cinema; theme parks; museums, and involvement in special events like themed walks for Halloween. Children also benefit from fun and enjoyable experiences like going on holiday, and going to watch major sporting spectacles in line with their interests. These experiences enable children to gain confidence, develop new skills, and take advantage of new learning opportunities.

Staff are proactive in encouraging and supporting contact with family members. Children's families are welcome at the home. This benefits children who see staff and parents working together in their best interests. Children have enjoyed seeing their parents share family recipes with staff, so they can enjoy their favourite foods. Children's relationships with their families improve, and this means they are enjoying

more constructive relationships with people who are important to them.

Quality of care

adequate

A committed and enthusiastic staff team promote children's welfare and help them to progress. Children say they are happy, and can identify that their lives are improving as a result of living in the home. Staff are good role models, and provide appropriate guidance to children. As a result, children learn to develop different coping strategies to manage their behaviour more appropriately. For example, children are able to make a positive choice to go to their room to calm down, or ask staff to go for a walk with them. This demonstrates that children are developing the necessary skills to manage conflict and overcome difficulties.

Placement planning is mostly good. Social workers visit the home before a child is admitted, and staff work well with the placing authorities to source as much information as possible about a child's history and level of needs. This informs the placement plan, and ensures the delivery of individualised support. Children do not always get sufficient information, including photographs, about the home before they move in. This is an area identified for improvement, so that children can have further reassurances and information about the home they are moving to, and staff who will be looking after them.

Placement plans provide a clear picture of children's individual needs. They are subject to regular review, provide good evaluation, and identify areas where children have made progress. Updated plans are not routinely signed and dated by social workers or, where appropriate, parents. This is an area identified for improvement to ensure plans are reviewed, and implemented, in partnership with the placing authority and relevant people important to the child.

Children benefit from good routines and a nurturing environment. This provides children with a consistency of care, and helps them to feel more secure. For example, where children find bedtimes difficult, they receive reassurances to help them settle more easily. Furthermore, because staff work well together and are consistent, children learn what is expected of them.

Children attend the organisation's school. Some children attend full-time, whereas others have a part-time timetable supplemented with home tutoring. Staff support children's attendance at school, and help them to focus on their learning at home. One social worker said, 'he is more engaged in education now, than previously.' As a result, children's educational outcomes are steadily improving. However, during this inspection gaps were identified relating to education planning and review. Staff at the home have not addressed this with school, or the respective placing authority.

Consequently, programmes of work provided to children are not needs led, and progress cannot be effectively measured against their starting points. This does not help children to reach their full potential.

Some shortfalls in recording the administration of medication have been identified through the home's own quality monitoring processes. Action has been taken to address these, and during the inspection it is clear that improvements have been made. This means, arrangements for the administration and recording of medication are now satisfactory. As a result, children's welfare is appropriately maintained.

Children say they can talk to staff if they have concerns. Staff regularly seek children's views through regular house meetings and informal consultation. This means they have some influence over day to day activity in the home, in line with their age and development. For example, children are clearly able to exercise choice over what food they eat, and what activities they do.

The home is maintained to a good standard, and is warm and welcoming for children and visitors. The atmosphere in the home is calm, and children certainly feel at home.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

The service has a number of policies and procedures in place designed to safeguard children in their care. Staff receive regular training, and have a good awareness of safeguarding procedures and practice. They understand their own, and other agencies, responsibilities in keeping young people safe. This promotes the safety and welfare of children.

The organisation has responded to concerns from external agencies about gang related activity and influences within the immediate vicinity of the home. Young people became involved in anti-social behaviour, and regularly went missing. This compromised their safety. Arrangements were made for the young people to move on from the home, in order to secure their safety and welfare. As a result of the concerns, the manager has revised the admissions criteria in respect of children coming to live at the home. Much younger children are now resident, levels of supervision are high, and any issues in the local area are not having an impact on their safety and wellbeing.

Children living in the home say they feel safe. Because staff implement clear and consistent boundaries, children learn to manage their behaviour more appropriately. Children respond positively to the calm, measured responses of the manager and staff. Children are positively praised and rewarded for appropriate behaviour; this helps to build self-esteem and ensures that negative behaviour does not become the only focus of attention.

Each young person has an individual risk assessment that identifies particular vulnerabilities, and outlines strategies for managing these. As a result, children become more aware of the dangers and vulnerabilities they face. For example, prior to coming to live at the home one child was regularly running away. This no longer happens, and therefore the risks surrounding this behaviour have dramatically reduced. Another child initially displayed very impulsive behaviour, and would run across the road. Because of the work undertaken by staff, the child now wants to hold a staff members' hand when crossing the road. This means they have a greater understanding of dangers, and are able to keep themselves safe.

Staff receive training in managing behaviour, including the use of physical intervention. Staff confirm restraint is only used as a last resort to safeguard children. The number of incidents involving restrictive physical intervention is reducing. This further indicates that children are making progress in relation to their behaviour and starting points. The inspection identified some shortfalls in the recording and monitoring of restraint practice in the home. Records do not fully describe what measures are used, clearly identify who is involved, and provide children and staff with the opportunity to reflect on incidents that occur. Furthermore, a lack of effective evaluation means patterns and trends are not identified, to inform future practice. This does not wholly protect children, or fully safeguard staff working in the home.

Staff continue to lock some communal rooms at night. This practice has not been reviewed, given the change in age and needs of the children now living in the home. As a result, children do not have access to communal areas of the home at their free will, and this has the potential to give the home an institutional feel.

Recruitment processes, and thorough vetting of new care staff ensure that children are appropriately safeguarded. However, the Registered Manager has not fully vetted information relating to education staff visiting the home. Some information is missing from their personnel file that is required to be held under regulation. Because education staff do not work with children unsupervised in the home, this has not directly compromised their safety. However, it does not demonstrate wholly robust practice, and is an area identified for improvement.

Children live in a safe environment. Routine health and safety monitoring ensures the home is running safely. Children and staff regularly take part in fire evacuation drills, at different times, and know what action to take in the event of a fire in the home.

Leadership and management

adequate

The Registered Manager of the home has changed since the last inspection. He began working in the home in April 2014, and was registered with Ofsted in October 2014. He holds an NVQ Level 5 in Leadership and Management, and therefore is appropriately qualified.

The Registered Manager has demonstrated effective leadership through a challenging period in the home's history. This, together with the organisation's response to external concerns, demonstrates the home's capacity to address issues appropriately to promote the welfare of children living in the home. Staff have remained committed and enthusiastic, and children are now benefiting from improved placement stability.

Staff say they feel appropriately supported, and confirm the manager is approachable. All staff receive regular supervision of good quality, and receive an annual appraisal of their performance. The induction of new staff is thorough, and this means they are well prepared. Staff undertake a range of training opportunities to inform their practice. Furthermore, the Registered Manager has arranged training to ensure the specific health needs of children are met. As a result, staff keep up to date with their learning, and are equipped with the necessary skills to appropriately meet the needs of children in their care.

Internal and external monitoring of the home takes place regularly. The manager does not always respond promptly to issues identified by the independent visitor. For example, although the recording of medication has improved, the recording of restraint has not. Moreover, the manager has not identified and addressed missing information in respect of children's education. As a result, monitoring of records is not sufficiently robust to ensure good practice and standards of care are consistently maintained.

Significant events that occur in the home are not always reported to relevant bodies, in line with regulation. As a result, those with an interest in children's welfare are not kept informed of such events. This does not demonstrate wholly effective management oversight, and is an area identified for improvement. The manager is reflective, and is striving to improve the service. There is a development plan in place for the home that identifies how to secure improvement for the future. This helps the manager and staff achieve goals to improve the quality of care children receive.

The two recommendations made at the last inspection have been met. However, because the age and needs of children accommodated in the home have changed there needs to be a further review of the locking of communal doors at night. Therefore, one recommendation is repeated.

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.