

Children's homes – Interim inspection

Inspection date	26/04/2016
Unique reference number	SC023743
Type of inspection	Interim
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	Position vacant
Inspector	Helen Lee

Inspection date	26/04/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home, and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection This home was judged good at the last full inspection. At this interim inspection, Ofsted judges that it has declined in effectiveness. This home has declined due to a period of ineffective and inconsistent leadership. Since the last inspection, the registered manager has left the home, giving less than three months' notice. A new manager was appointed and worked in the home for a month before leaving in March. The area manager for the organisation is now managing the home on an interim basis. He has a good level of knowledge and experience, and was previously the registered manager for a similar service. The interim manager acknowledged that there are shortfalls in the service and shows a determination to put them right. The provider has internally promoted an applicant to undertake this role going forward, who is due to start managing imminently. The requirement regarding protecting children by checking the identification of visitors to the home made at the last inspection has been addressed. This is now done routinely and the interim manager continues to remind staff through team meetings. The two recommendations made at the last inspection have not been met, and are therefore made as requirements at this visit. The first is in respect of records reflecting children's history and progress, and the other is regarding the home's children's guide. The needs of young people admitted to the home are not consistently met. Inconsistent staffing and a lack of records led to a period where information was not shared and practice was poor. On occasion, challenging behaviours have included incidents where children have threatened and used violence against staff and each other. Staff identified that key working was required, or work was identified after an incident to help children, but little of this ever commenced. One staff member reflected, 'there was no real direction while trying to get a	

(children's) plan together, so there was lots of change and this was confusing for the children.'

Due to a lack of clear planning, some children's behaviours were not well managed, and previous effective strategies and recommendations were not deployed. One social worker commented, 'I don't feel that the staff fully understand my child's level of functioning. There have been times when their expectations have been age-appropriate but not cognitively appropriate for him.' During this period, the home was particularly unsettled. One child new to the home struggled to settle and has moved on. Two of the three children were not in full-time education. This, combined with a high level of staffing changes and management fluidity, created an atmosphere of change that was not conducive to a feeling of stability.

There are some positive and meaningful relationships between staff and children. The level of progress made by them is variable. Some children have used key relationships well and have progressed with their education, accepting praise, support through a period of loss and social friendships. These have included invitations to birthday parties, which one child was incredibly proud of. As a social worker stated, 'This child also found it very difficult to settle at bedtime and this was where some of his challenging behaviour would manifest. Due to positive changes in his bedtime routine, this little boy now.... falls asleep without any further interruption. This is a major shift in the behaviour of this young person.' However, some of this progress remains unrecorded and, as a staff member stated, 'although he has made great progress, it is a shame we haven't been able to record it for him (and his future self)'.

The interim manager is aware of previous shortfalls and has prioritised role-modelling practice on shifts, as well as forming relationships with the children in the home. This has led to a more recent stabilised period whereby incidents and restraints are starting to decrease significantly. He has a clear action plan, although it is not recorded, regarding supporting the new manager, with a package including mentoring him, inducting and supporting a full staff team, and placing a hold on new referrals for at least six weeks. He has already made some progress with this plan. A social worker commented that, 'acknowledging that there was a problem with my child's placement, and being willing to work with the local authority to rectify this, has been a great strength.'

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide care for up to three children and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is owned and managed by a private company.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/12/2015	CH – Interim	Sustained effectiveness
08/06/2015	CH – Full	Good
18/03/2015	CH – Interim	improved effectiveness
20/01/2015	CH – Full	Adequate

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 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
Appoint a manager to manage the children's home and notify without delay HMCI (Regulation 27(1) and (2)).	27/06/2016
Ensure that children's case records are kept up to date and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. In particular, that the information is clear, objective and understandable to the reader (Regulation 36(1) (a) (b) and (c)).	27/06/2016
6: The quality and purpose of care standard In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard, with particular reference to providing consistent evaluated care which is also recorded, the registered person must ensure that staff: (2)(b) (ii) protect and promote each child's welfare; and (iv) provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background;	27/06/2016
8: The education standard In order to meet the education standard, with particular reference to ensuring that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential, the registered person must ensure that staff: (2)(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;	27/06/2016
10: The health and well-being standard	27/06/2016

In order to meet the health and well-being standard, with particular reference to ensuring the health and well-being needs of children are met, the registered person must ensure that staff: (2)(a) (i) help each child to achieve the health and well-being outcomes that are recorded in the child's relevant plans; (ii) understand the child's health and well-being needs and the options that are available in relation to the child's health and well-being, in a way that is appropriate to the child's age and understanding;	
7: The children's views, wishes and feelings standard In order to meet the children's views, wishes and feelings standard, with particular reference to evidencing children's views and consultation, the registered person must ensure to: (2)(c) keep the children's guide and the home's complaints procedure under review and seek children's comments before revising either document;	25/07/2016
11: The positive relationships standard In order to meet the positive relationships standard, with particular reference to evidencing that staff through recorded supervision and effective team meetings: (2)(a) (x) are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same;	27/06/2016
13: The leadership and management standard In order to meet the leadership and management standard, with particular reference consistently to evidencing leading the home and having effective systems in place to monitor the management of the home, including written development plans, the registered person must ensure to: (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;	27/06/2016

Recommendations

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

- Children must be consulted regularly on their views about the home's care, to inform and support continued improvement in the quality of care provided. Due consideration should be given to the child's cognitive ability in the development and implementation of any consultation processes. Children should be able to see the results of their views being listened to and acted upon ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.11).
- The development of safe, stable and secure relationships with staff in the home should be central to the ethos of the home and support the development of secure attachments that, where appropriate, persist over time. In particular by ensuring a stable staff team and evidence of relationships being built through written and evaluated key-working ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 8.11).

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

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 focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

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 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards'.

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