

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	01/10/2015
Unique reference number	SC023744
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	Donna Gallagher
Inspector	Jan Hunnam

Inspection date	01/10/2015
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	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

SC023744

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- A strong Registered Manager provides effective leadership to staff who are motivated to provide high quality care and promote positive outcomes for children.
- Through close, individualised support, children are developing trusting relationships with staff and a sense of stability and security. Within a short time from admission, children are showing improvements in their behaviour.
- Children enjoy living in the home. Staff actively engage with them in play and meaningful activities so they have positive childhood experiences, build self-confidence, a sense of identity and appropriate social skills.
- Comprehensive individual care plans guide staff to support children. Staff regularly review strategies to minimise any risk of harm.
- Staff work proactively with external professionals to promote positive outcomes for children.

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/or behavioural difficulties. The home is privately owned.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
25/09/2014	Full	Good
26/02/2014	Interim	Satisfactory progress
13/08/2013	Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
A new group of children are settling in to the home and staff are focusing on developing positive, trusting relationships with them. Initially the group presented very challenging behaviour but children are now responding to staff's close attention to meeting their needs. Incidents of challenging behaviour are decreasing as they build confidence in the staff who care for them. They are realising they can talk to staff about their feelings and staff will listen and take action. Staff closely supervise children, engaging them in meaningful dialogue and activities, protecting them and promoting their welfare. Staff place their well-being at the centre of practice. All children engage in education and are making progress. One child began his new school placement and was only able to engage in the process for a few minutes. He has made significant progress and is now able to participate for five hours. Effective links on a daily basis with school staff foster partnership working to ensure children's individual needs are met and approaches are consistent. Access to a wide range of recreational and social activities is integral in strategies to promote children's positive outcomes. With an emphasis on physical activities, staff encourage children to try new sports and pursue their specific interests. Mountain biking is a favourite activity. One child stated that he 'likes it at the home because he does stuff' and added that he particularly likes mountain biking in the rain and the mud. Other activities include trampolining, basketball, football and rock climbing. Staff recognise when children have particular skills and have plans to arrange coaching to foster these talents. Consequently, they develop self-confidence, self-esteem and a sense of belonging in the local community. Detailed health plans with individual targets ensure children receive health services according to their specific needs. Staff work in partnership with external health professionals to provide specialist assessments and with the organisation's therapy team to plan relevant therapeutic interventions to promote their emotional and psychological well-being. Staff are vigilant in responding to signs of children's emotional distress. They monitor them closely whilst waiting for expert assessment and treatment plans. Staff view healthy eating as a central part of promoting a healthy lifestyle. Staff	

encourage children to eat more fruit and vegetables and try new foods. Recent focus on blackberries and mangoes on the menu is an example of a proactive approach to a healthy diet, educating children to think about the food they eat and establishing good habits. Children have requested healthy options such as more fish dishes on their menu through their group meetings.

Staff work proactively with parents and carers to enable children to maintain positive and meaningful relationships.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The home provides a safe environment for children who have experienced unpredictable and unsafe situations in their past. Through close supervision from thoughtful and consistent staff with strong boundaries, routines and structure, they develop a sense of safety, protection and trust in the adults who care for them. Staff are open and honest with children. Consequently, children are clear about what aspects of their behaviour causes concern and are building confidence in staff's responsiveness to their individual needs. They are beginning to make attachments and developing skills to regulate their emotions and behaviour. With warmth, good humour and patience, staff manage children's boisterous and often volatile behaviour so that they learn to live together as a group and begin to develop an understanding of how their behaviour affects others. The new group of children have little understanding of bullying. Staff are making continuous efforts to educate them and raise their perception and awareness of such behaviour. Staff address issues in children's meetings, key work sessions and through immediate intervention when such behaviour is evident. Staff have contacted the local police liaison officer to visit and discuss issues around bullying to reinforce staff's messages that bullying is not acceptable. Children are thus learning tolerance, respect for others and appropriate ways of interacting with their peers. Staff identify and understand any risks associated with each child. Appropriate measures protect them from harm. Individualised risk assessments are current. Behaviour management strategies provide staff with supportive interventions specific to each child. Children receive appropriate support to manage their behaviour and emotions effectively. The staff team regularly review such support in team meetings and supervision sessions to ensure they are receiving effective responses to their difficulties. Strategies focus on reinforcing positive behaviour	

rather than punishment for inappropriate behaviour.

Physical intervention is used only when necessary to reduce the risk of harm to children and others or serious damage to property. The Registered Manager, who is a trained instructor in behaviour management, has correctly focused on closely monitoring incidents resulting in physical intervention and providing staff with support and training to manage such incidents safely and reduce their occurrence. Incidents are properly recorded, including an explanation and discussion with the child and details of the debrief with staff to allow reflection, improve supportive strategies and ensure safe practice.

Prior to the admission of this new group of children, there were frequent incidents of young people leaving the home without permission. Records demonstrate that staff effectively apply agreed procedures with the local police to ensure their safe return. Staff routinely offer return interviews but records show that young people frequently decline the opportunity to discuss the episode when they are away from the home. Managers agree the arrangements for return interviews at the initial placement meeting. Some local authorities agree that an area manager from the organisation, who is not overseeing the home, conducts the return interview. Area managers have undertaken training to perform this role. When young people decline to discuss the incident, staff and key workers endeavour to obtain information to ensure effective strategies safeguard young people. There have been no incidents involving current children being reported missing.

Staff have undertaken training in safeguarding children and are aware of the risks facing them, including the risk of child sexual exploitation. They have completed the local authority's risk assessment toolkit for child sexual exploitation for each child and have measures to safeguard their welfare.

Robust recruitment processes are in place to protect children from unsuitable adults working with them. All checks on prospective employees are undertaken before they commence work at the home.

Health and safety checks are up to date. Appropriate fire safety measures are routinely applied.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

An experienced and qualified Registered Manager has been in post since 2012. She provides strong, effective leadership and support for the staff team based on a clear understanding of the individual needs of children. Staff report she is 'very supportive and is available 24/7 for advice, guidance and support'. Working with a new group of younger children and some new staff, she inspires staff to use their initiative and provide children with positive, appropriate childhood experiences. With a focus on developing strong, trusting relationships and an understanding of the meaning of their challenging behaviour, staff are enabling children to settle and begin to talk about their feelings rather than be violent and aggressive.

Staff follow a comprehensive induction programme and training relevant to their role to ensure they are competent and confident in meeting children's needs. They receive regular supervision. Records demonstrate detailed discussion of issues affecting children, including matters affecting their safety and well-being. Staff are motivated, resilient and keen to provide children with opportunities to achieve positive outcomes.

Continuous, active monitoring by the Registered Manager of the functioning of the home drives forward improvement focused on the needs of children. She has a thorough understanding of activity within the home, the needs of children living at the home and of staff performance. Effective challenge of staff practice supports children to maximise their progress. Staff meetings are extremely child-focused with discussion focusing on improvements to care practices to ensure children receive effective support to promote their development.

Quarterly internal monitoring reports and monthly reports by an independent visitor contribute to a quality assurance system that addresses any issues and results in improvements to the service. The Registered Manager is implementing a development plan to promote and develop positive relationships and provide children with consistent care within a warm and secure environment where they develop a sense of belonging. She recognises that the transition within the home to accommodate a new group of younger children has required a fresh approach to meet their needs. Consequently, she is focusing on monitoring and evaluating all aspects of their care and changing strategies to ensure they receive positive and meaningful interventions. In a short period, children are making good progress.

Staff have meaningful consultation with children. Records of children's meetings demonstrate that staff actively seek their views on menus, activities and the home environment. Their ideas and feedback influence the day-to-day running of the home and show them that their views are important. Individual key work sessions give children individual opportunities to express their feelings and opinions. The Registered Manager and staff consider this feedback at team meetings and make appropriate amendments to care plans to ensure strategies are relevant to their

changing needs. There have been no complaints from children since the last inspection.

The home has received two complaints from neighbours since the last inspection relating to loud music and rubbish left outside the home. Both complaints have been dealt with and resolved satisfactorily, including a personal apology to the neighbour by the young person responsible for the loud music.

The Registered Manager takes an active role in reviewing and evaluating children's care plans to ensure strategies promote their progress. Proactive work with other professionals and agencies such as the child and adolescent mental health service, school staff and health professionals enhances the support the home offers for children with complex emotional needs.

Despite damage caused to the home by children displaying extremely challenging behaviour on admission, the Registered Manager is ensuring the home provides a welcoming and relaxing environment. Damage is promptly rectified to show them that staff value the environment where they live and they deserve a pleasant, well maintained home in which staff care for them and help them flourish.

The home's statement of purpose is clear and informative. The home meets the expressed aim of providing a caring, nurturing 'family' environment where children feel healthy, safe and secure and where they are able to grow, develop and achieve.

The recommendation made at the last inspection has been met and there are no requirements or recommendations made at this inspection.

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 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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