

SC023746

Registered provider: Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and run by a private organisation. It provides care and accommodation for up to three young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Inspection dates: 23 to 24 October 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers good

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 22 November 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: Sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff, who have a good understanding of their needs. The small staff team attains good, cohesive

working, meaning that young people know what is expected of them, and who is caring for them.

- Young people's plans are clear and fluid documents. They are reviewed with young people monthly. Staff add comments on progress and areas for further development throughout the month, which ensures that information is current.
- Staff support young people who have specific health conditions to be as independent as possible. They have had relevant training which ensures that they know how to respond if the condition deteriorates. The same member of staff attends all appointments with young people to ensure consistency.
- Young people's emotional well-being is paramount. Regular reviews with the organisation's therapy coordinator ensures that young people are receiving the most effective therapy to meet their needs.

The children's home's areas for development:

- The home was not in an acceptable state on arrival at inspection. Areas were dirty, with a build-up of dust and grime, including in the kitchen and bathrooms. Carpets were frayed and snagged in several rooms.
- A young person had raised an incident of concern regarding staff at his school. This had not been reported to external professionals at the time of inspection. The young person was not at immediate risk during this time, as the school was closed for the holidays.
- An incident requiring police support was not reported to Ofsted as a safeguarding notification.
- Young people's views are regularly sought. However, it is not always clear how these are responded to, particularly when their expressed wishes are deemed by staff to be against their best interests.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/11/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
28/06/2016	Full	Good
01/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
14/09/2015	Full	Good

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet 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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure that staff— understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; and take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(a)(v)(vii)) Specifically, inform relevant professionals of any safeguarding concern, in a timely manner.	30/11/2017
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health. (Regulation 12(1)(2)(d)) Specifically, keep the home cleaned and maintained to an acceptable standard.	30/11/2017

Recommendations

- In some instances, a child may express wishes that are not always in their best interests or which may conflict with the views of other children in the home. In such circumstances, the responsible adults will have to balance the wishes of the child against what they judge to be in the best interests of the child and reach a reasonable view about the best way forward in the interests of them all. The reasons for reaching any decision will need to be carefully explained and

understood by the child or children concerned. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.9)

- The registered person should have a system in place so that all serious events are notified, within 24 hours, to the appropriate people. The system should cover the action that should be followed if the event arises at the weekend or on a public holiday. Notification must include details of the action taken by the home's staff in response to the event. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.3)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people make good progress while living in the home and have some particularly positive relationships with staff. The home has a relaxed atmosphere, and young people were observed playing games and chatting to staff. Their demeanour showed that they felt comfortable in their home. Young people were confident while talking to inspectors, often seeking them out for a chat or to offer them drinks.

Young people are actively encouraged to share their views and ideas, including during house meetings and key-work sessions. Young people said that they are listened to and that their ideas are considered. Examples given included choosing how they would like to spend their birthday with family members and changing the colour of their bedroom. However, there is no formal record of how young people's views and ideas are responded to, including when their wishes are deemed to be not in their best interests.

Those who are new to the home are welcomed and are able to choose how they would like their bedroom to be decorated. Transitions to the home are tailored to individual needs. Where appropriate, young people are supported to maintain contact with former carers. This is balanced with the need for them to bond with staff in this home, particularly for one young person who lived close by in another home within the organisation. When moving on, staff endeavour to help young people ready themselves for the move. This was particularly challenging for one young person who struggled to accept that it was time to move on to independence. During this period, staff maintained close contact with the individual's social worker, who commented positively about the staff's commitment to the young person.

All young people attend full-time education, either at one of the organisation's schools or in specialised provisions in the community. Staff engage well with teaching and support staff, including holding daily handovers. When necessary, staff have supported young people in lessons when there has been difficulty in managing their behaviour, in order to minimise disruption and reduce the risk of exclusion.

Young people are supported to follow healthy lifestyles and are educated in what this means for them. They are encouraged to take physical exercise, and all engage in activities within the community. Those with specific health conditions are supported to

attend appointments by the same staff members, to ensure consistency and to help build relationships with health professionals. Staff are aware of how to respond should an individual display signs of their condition worsening, and they have had training in specific responses and medical interventions. Emotional well-being is monitored through discussion with the organisation's therapies team; young people are actively assisted to access the therapy likely to be most beneficial for them.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Young people's actions and demeanour show that they feel safe in their home. They all identified staff to whom they would go if worried or upset. Interactions during the inspection showed young people approaching staff to help them resolve issues within the group, with some young people managing to self-regulate their behaviour, taking themselves away from conflict, and returning and apologising when calm.

Staff are confident in their roles regarding safeguarding and child protection. They actively listen to young people and take their concerns seriously. Records are clear about any allegations or disclosures made, but there has been a delay in reporting to the social worker or designated officer a concern that a young person raised about staff at school. This was rectified by the manager during the inspection, and, due to the time of disclosure and school holidays, neither the young person nor other young people were placed at any further risk due to this delay in reporting.

The cleanliness and maintenance of the home on the first day of inspection was not to an acceptable standard. There was a build-up of grease and grime in the kitchen; bathrooms had grime, mildew and lime scale build-up; the carpets were frayed or had snags in several rooms; the porch was dirty, with cigarette burns on the doorbell. The registered manager and service manager acknowledged the issue and immediately started to rectify the shortfalls.

Staff have a good understanding of young people's behaviour and what it is communicating. They use their relationships and knowledge of the young person to defuse situations of distress or anxiety. The use of restraint is only as a last resort and to protect the young person or others from immediate risk. There has been one incident when the police were called to the home to support a member of staff who felt unable to keep the young person or others safe. This is a rare occurrence for this home. The use of police to support staff on this occasion was not notified to Ofsted.

The current group of young people do not go missing from care. Two young people who have moved on to semi-independence in recent months had both had incidents of being missing from the home. Staff responses were effective, and individual plans are clear on how to respond if a young person is missing. Records demonstrate staff trying to locate young people, and informing the correct partner agencies. Close working with the local police helped to identify adults of concern in the local community who were allowing young people into their homes. The manager and staff were proactive in requesting

strategy meetings regarding the particular risk that one young person was at. The safeguarding lead within the organisation also provided guidance and acted as liaison with the police and placing authority. Agreements had been made with one placing authority that the safeguarding lead would also provide independent return interviews. This was a positive agreement for the young person, as even when he chose not to engage, the safeguarding lead explored issues with staff and scrutinised records and patterns of going missing, to determine how best to support the young person.

Young people are afforded the opportunity to take age-appropriate risks in line with their abilities and vulnerability. Risk assessments are thoughtful and robust and identify what the risk would be without protective factors. Risk assessments are reviewed monthly, and are seen as a living document. Each young person benefits from a vulnerability assessment to identify any concerns, while allowing them as much freedom as is deemed appropriate.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is well run by an enthusiastic and aspirational registered manager. He was incredibly disappointed by the shortfalls identified at inspection and responded to rectify these immediately.

The small staff group within the home works cohesively, and staff members said that they form a supportive team. There have been no new members since the last inspection, and staff commented that this has helped them with consistency, and also in professional challenge should they feel another's practice is not to a good standard. Staff confirmed that they are well trained and have access to seniors and managers at all times. Supervision is regular and developmental.

The home's manager makes effective use of the monitoring by the independent person in line with Regulation 44. Additionally, he conducts monthly monitoring of the home, files and care. This contributes purposefully into the six-monthly evaluations and the development plan for the home.

The manager reviews young people's progress monthly with key workers. Plans are detailed and evidence the progress that young people have made in relation to their goals and targets. Plans are fluid and have a section for staff to add what young people have achieved or discussions that they have had that month. This results in plans which accurately reflect how young people have been supported to develop throughout their time living in the home. Plans are updated monthly with young people's input, including what areas they feel that they need to develop.

Joint working with partner agencies is embedded in daily practice. The staff and manager maintain contact with a range of professionals to ensure that all are aware of progress, or areas of concern. Staff advocate effectively for young people, including challenging decisions that they feel are not in the young person's best interests. An example is a request to monitor a young person to a degree that left little privacy. This

decision by an external professional was challenged and subsequently modified in the young person's best interests. Professionals deemed not to be providing the service that they should are also challenged, and this includes escalating concerns to team managers when needed.

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: SC023746

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited

Registered provider address: 17 Leigh Road, Ramsgate, Kent CT12 5EU

Responsible individual: Leslie Davenport

Registered manager: Martin Jones

Inspectors

Jennie Christopher, social care inspector

Maria Lonergan, social care inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

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