

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	29 June 2016
Unique reference number	SC030797
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited
Registered provider address	Ethelbert Specialist Homes, Cheesemans Farmhouse, Alland Grange Lane, Manston, Ramsgate CT12 5BZ

Responsible individual	Leslie Davenport
Registered manager	Sidney Coffin
Inspector	Jan Hunnam

Inspection date	29 June 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	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	Good

SC030797

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- All staff are focusing on establishing positive, trusting relationships with a new group of young children. Because of this, children with complex emotional needs are showing improvements in their behaviour within a short time.
- Staff provide a safe and nurturing environment where children benefit from individualised care and develop a sense of security. Children are closely supervised to minimise risk.
- Children enjoy living in the home. Staff actively engage with them in play and meaningful activities so that they have positive childhood experiences and have fun.
- An experienced registered manager provides effective leadership to staff who are motivated to provide high-quality care and promote positive outcomes for children.
- Senior managers within the organisation are committed to providing a new staff team with an intense level of support to ensure that children benefit from appropriate strategies and make progress.
- Monitoring systems are rigorous tools for maintaining high standards. The independent person's reports require a clear judgement about whether children are effectively safeguarded and whether the conduct of the home promotes their well-being.
- Staff receive individual supervision, but the regularity of these sessions is not currently in line with the organisation's policy due to the intense support that staff and managers are providing for children to help them settle in the home and build effective relationships with staff.

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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The independent person must produce a report about a visit ('the independent person's report') which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether children are effectively safeguarded and the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being. (Regulation 44 (4)(a)(b))	26 August 2016

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that staff receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. In particular, staff receive regular supervision in line with the organisation's policy ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards, page 61, paragraph 13.2).

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is owned by a private organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to nine children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/03/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
19/08/2015	Full	Good
18/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
30/10/2014	Full	Adequate

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 into the home. Staff are extremely busy coping with the complexity of their needs in terms of their age and their emotional responses resulting from past experiences. Staff are focusing on developing positive, trusting relationships with them and providing a safe and nurturing experience. This correct emphasis is proving successful as children respond to staff's close attention to meeting their needs. Children are learning that staff will support them in times of distress, help them through difficult times and provide them with play opportunities so that they have fun together. Children's behaviour is improving and incidents of challenging behaviour are reducing. All children attend education. Some are on individualised timetables with support from staff, as their emotional difficulties currently impinge on their ability to engage in full-time education. Effective daily links with school staff foster partnership working to ensure that staff meet children's individual needs and that approaches are consistent. One child who was excluded from school prior to living at the home is now attending school with staff support. Staff monitor children's health needs and provide them with a healthy lifestyle, including nutritious meals and ample physical exercise. Staff identify and respond to children's specific health needs. As children are developing trust in the adults who care for them, they are allowing staff to establish appropriate healthcare routines such as applying skin cream. Staff refer children to external health professionals, for example the child and adolescent mental health service, for specialist assessment. Children have opportunities to access direct therapy from the organisation's therapy team. One child is currently benefiting from this support. Children participate in a range of activities appropriate to their age, both within the home and in the local community, such as swimming and trips to the beach and the park. Managers have plans to develop the range of play resources available within the home to promote children's development. While this new group of young children are settling, staff are consulting with them on an individual basis rather than attempting to hold group meetings. Through key work sessions and informal conversations, children have opportunities to put forward their views. They are choosing meals for the menu, requesting specific activities and making known their likes and dislikes. Children are learning that their views are important and that staff listen to them, developing their self-esteem and an understanding that staff appreciate them as unique individuals. Staff work proactively with children's families 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 and nurturing environment for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties who have experienced unpredictable and unsafe situations in their past. Through close staff supervision, a consistent approach and strong boundaries, routines and structure, children recently admitted to the home are developing a sense of safety, protection and trust in the adults who care for them. Staff are making great efforts to build positive relationships with children who are often suffering the effects of trauma resulting in distressing outbursts of emotion. In a short period, children's behaviour is improving. Violent and aggressive incidents are reducing as they are learning to have confidence in staff to respond to their emotional needs. One child is now able to verbalise the cause of his distress rather than express his intense emotions through violent behaviour. Children receive appropriate support to manage their behaviour. Staff receive training to develop de-escalation skills and to use physical intervention techniques safely in relation to the children's age. Managers carefully consider and monitor such incidents to ensure safe practice and evaluate support strategies. Because of these strategies and the developing trust in staff, the frequency of incidents requiring physical intervention is notably decreasing. Staff record incidents properly, including a conversation with the child following the event. Staff are managing children's boisterous and often volatile behaviour with warmth and good humour. As expected, children are lively and energetic but the enthusiastic staff team are responding to their needs and engaging with them in play activities appropriate to their age and stage of development. Staff identify and understand the risks associated with each child. Individualised strategies guide staff in providing effective interventions and protection to advance children's development. Some children are placed at the home on a short-term basis while their placing authority source a placement appropriate to their long-term plan. Staff implement risk assessments and 24-hour management plans for all children. For those who are placed at the home on a longer-term basis, comprehensive and detailed care plans address all their specific needs. Staff supervise children closely to protect them. There have been four occasions when two children have left the home together without permission. On all these occasions staff have taken appropriate action, following the children, searching for them if they are out of sight and reporting them as missing. Placing authorities are not doing return interviews. Instead they have agreed that an independent person, arranged by the organisation, will carry out the return interviews. The frequency of these incidents has reduced as children respond to clear and consistent boundaries	

and staff support to promote their security and well-being.

Robust recruitment processes are in place to safeguard 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. The home employs a full-time maintenance worker who oversees fire safety measures. Systems are now in place to ensure that routine checks are implemented in his absence.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
Following a serious incident, senior managers closed the home from September 2015 to March 2016. An experienced and qualified manager has been in post since re-opening and he is registered with Ofsted. The home is now accommodating younger children in line with the statement of purpose. With the support of an experienced deputy manager, the manager is establishing a new staff team. The organisation has recognised the necessity for an intense level of support for the staff in this early stage and so the area manager is providing day-to-day support. He is working alongside managers to give staff guidance and direction and they are role modelling how to develop positive relationships with the children. This important focus on developing relationships with the children is proving effective as children are beginning to make attachments with staff and their behaviour is improving. Staff follow a comprehensive induction programme and training relevant to their role to ensure that they are competent and confident in meeting children's needs. Staff who have completed their probation period are qualified to the required level or are working towards the qualification within the required timescale. Staff and the registered manager are receiving supervision to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children. However, the regularity of these sessions is currently not in line with the organisation's policy due to the concentrated support that staff and managers are providing for the children to help them settle in the home and build attachments with staff. Internal monitoring of the home is successful in identifying and promptly rectifying shortfalls. The registered manager produces fortnightly monitoring reports which enable managers to assess children's progress and experience and amend support strategies as necessary. These reports contribute to quarterly reports, which are sent to Ofsted. Monthly reports by an independent person contribute to a quality assurance system that addresses any issues and results in improvements to the service. However, these reports do not clearly express the independent person's view on the effectiveness of safeguarding or how well staff promote children's well-being.	

Team meetings are child-focused with detailed discussion of children's individual needs, plans, support strategies and safeguarding issues. Managers plan to include a therapist in these meetings shortly, to offer staff further support and guidance to understand the meaning of children's behaviour and develop an appropriate response.

The registered manager takes an active role in reviewing and evaluating children's care plans to ensure that strategies promote their progress. Proactive work with other professionals and agencies such as school staff and health professionals enhances the support that staff offer children with complex emotional needs.

Managers are implementing a development plan focusing on developing the staff team, close monitoring of the quality of the provision, supporting children's education and developing staff knowledge and understanding of the importance of play in the children's development. The requirement and recommendations made at the previous inspection have been met.

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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