

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC030797
Inspector	Janet Hunnam
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	Louise Elizabeth Jones
Date of last inspection	04/03/2014

Inspection date	30/10/2014
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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	good
Keeping children and young people safe	adequate
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	adequate
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The home provides young people with good standards of care, support and guidance. A committed and caring staff team, led by strong managers, provide young people with opportunities to develop trusting relationships and accept the support offered to them. Some young people make good progress at the home whilst others are not engaging positively with staff and their risk-taking and challenging behaviour is increasing. A clear, robust response from managers and staff to the testing behaviour of some young people protect young people's welfare. Staff are working cohesively to safeguard young people through a period of instability at the home where there have been difficult relationships amongst the group of young people. Young people report they feel safe at the home. However, there has been incident where it was apparent that a young person was subject to bullying and did not feel safe. Immediate action was taken by the home to safeguard young people and staff are closely monitoring and supervising young people to prevent such behaviour.

Detailed and comprehensive care planning identify young people's individual, complex needs with specific strategies to promote positive outcomes. Young people report favourably about their time at the home. One young person stated 'staff are good and they sort out any problems' adding that he is happy living at the home 'and there is always something to do to keep me active'. A social worker stated that

staff 'go out of their way to keep the young person motivated and on track'.

Managers have effective oversight of the home. During the recent difficult period, they have taken appropriate action to minimise potential harm to young people. Monitoring systems ensure staff maintain high quality care. The home continually strives to improve outcomes for young people.

Two requirements are made as a result of this inspection. The effectiveness of sanctions imposed as a measure of discipline are not being given due consideration. Recent events have shown that the safety and welfare of some young people has not been effectively promoted though safeguarding measures have been considerably strengthened in the context of young people's escalating, high-risk behaviour.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is owned by a private organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to a maximum of nine young people, who may have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/03/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
21/05/2013	Full	good
15/01/2013	Interim	satisfactory progress
14/08/2012	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
11 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to promote and make proper provision for the safeguarding and welfare of children accommodated there (Regulation 11(1)(a))	05/12/2014
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose of which shall include the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure. (Regulation 17B(3)(f))	05/12/2014

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **adequate**

Some young people are making good progress at the home, especially when taking into account their starting point at the time of admission. Individualised, caring support from staff allows young people to develop relationships and build their confidence and self-esteem. A social worker commented that a young person 'has a very good relationship with his key worker' who is engaging the young person in constructive activities and consequently his behaviour 'has positively changed'. A parent commented that her son 'has come a long way, is doing really, really well and is now much calmer'. However, some young people's behaviour is not improving and their escalating, increasingly challenging behaviour is having a negative influence on the outcomes for other young people in the group.

Staff support young people to lead healthy lifestyles through eating nutritious meals and engaging in active leisure pursuits. They receive support to address their risk-taking behaviour though do not always choose to follow the advice given. Key workers provide young people with opportunities to build on positive relationships with staff and consider their behaviour and consequences. Young people receive specialist guidance and intervention when necessary. Consequently, some young people are gaining a more positive self-view, developing stronger emotional resilience resulting in improvements in their behaviour and interactions with others.

Staff support and encourage young people to engage in their education. Some young people have good attendance at school or college and make progress whilst others struggle to engage in education with behaviour issues impeding their advancement. A parent commented that the young person has 'made so much progress and is now applying himself in school rather than kicking off all the time'. Young people participate in community-based activities to widen their social experiences and pursue their individual interests.

Young people benefit from staff support to maintain contact with their family and people who are important to them in line with their placement plans. Parents and social workers report that communication with staff is effective and staff keep them informed of daily events.

Staff provide young people with appropriate support and guidance to prepare them for independence and their transition from the home. Young people have pathway plans in place to develop their life skills in preparation for adulthood with evidence of some young people making progress in this area.

Quality of care **good**

Young people live in an environment where staff value them as individuals. A young person commented that the home 'is a positive environment'. Staff are responsive to young people giving some young people the confidence to trust staff, develop constructive relationships and react positively to the support offered to them. Relationships are supportive and good humoured and young people have access to senior staff on a regular, informal basis. Key worker sessions are used constructively to assist young people who have difficulties in establishing and sustaining relationships and as a result, some young people are making progress. A young person commented that 'staff are very helpful and we get along'.

Staff are mindful of changing dynamics within the group and particularly when new young people move in to the home. Recently, young people have presented challenging, high-risk behaviour. The staff team have responded positively, instigating firm boundaries and working closely together to keep young people safe. Staff assist young people to cope and deal with issues arising from learning to live alongside others.

Staff value young people's views and consult with them individually on a daily basis and more formally through key working sessions. Weekly meetings with young people provide further opportunities for young people to be involved in day-to-day matters such as choosing meals for the menu and putting forward ideas for activities. Young people are aware of the complaints system within the home and use the process to voice their opinion on staff practice. Managers respond to these complaints by taking appropriate action in referring their allegations to the relevant authorities. Young people's allegations are investigated in line with local authority safeguarding practices. The processes for listening to young people and this responsive approach result in young people feeling that their views are valued and respected and thus develops their self-esteem.

Comprehensive care plans identify young people's individual needs and the support they require to make progress. 24-hour management plans encompass all aspects of their care and their specific needs, with individual support strategies providing staff with guidance to assist young people effectively. Staff plan key working sessions to address young people's needs and link their targets specifically to their care plan to promote positive outcomes. This engagement in their care planning process allows young people to be involved and aids their understanding of their development needs and their progress, thus promoting positive outcomes.

Staff pay close attention to young people's health needs, taking into account their physical health and emotional well-being. Staff ensure young people's health needs are met in line with their health plan. They receive external, specialist input when necessary including support from therapists and substance misuse professionals when appropriate. A robust system is in place for the administration of medication, ensuring staff administer medication safely.

Staff provide support and guidance to encourage young people to attend and engage

in their education. For those young people who experience difficulties in school, staff are creative in providing incentives for young people to attend. They are committed to ensuring young people have access to educational opportunities that provide the best opportunities for young people to maximise their potential. For young people who receive home tuition, the home has developed classroom facilities separate from the house, enabling young people to access fully their learning opportunities.

Young people participate in activities that take account of their individual interests and specific skills. These include playing basketball for a local team and leisure pursuits in the local community such as snooker, swimming, go-karting, cycling and walking. Young people benefit from these experiences by acquiring appropriate social skills and behaviour and are learning to use their leisure time positively. Young people enjoy one-to-one time with staff and various activities on site, which enables them to build positive relationships with staff and other young people at the home.

Young people live in a spacious, comfortable home close to local amenities. Plans are in place to improve the home. Redecoration and refurbishment is taking place to make it a pleasant, homely living environment. Young people personalise their rooms helping them to develop a sense of belonging and self-identity.

Keeping children and young people safe adequate

Difficult dynamics amongst the group of young people have resulted recently in incidents of bullying and challenging behaviour and subsequent police involvement. Managers and staff have taken appropriate action to manage young people's high-risk behaviour and protect young people's welfare. A senior manager from within the organisation is currently supporting the Registered Manager and the staff team on a daily basis, thus strengthening leadership and management through a difficult period. Young people are benefitting from a renewed emphasis on strong boundaries and staff vigilance to keep them safe. A social worker commented that staff 'are very clear about boundaries and behaviour expectations and staff challenge the young person' when they are testing these boundaries.

Suitable safeguarding protocols are in place and these are followed in practice. Managers refer safeguarding issues promptly to the relevant authorities ensuring that any concerns are dealt with promptly and proactively. Staff undertake training in safeguarding young people and understand their responsibilities.

Appropriate procedures are in place if a young person is absent from the home without permission, in line with local police protocols and staff follow these procedures. Young people have individual risk assessments that are highly detailed with clear safeguarding strategies. There have been incidents of young people leaving the home without permission. Records demonstrate that staff take appropriate action and focus on strategies to reduce the incidence of young people leaving without permission and protect their welfare.

As noted, the current group of young people have been presenting some particularly challenging and testing behaviour. Some of the issues include difficult relationships with each other. When peer conflicts arise or young people resort to bullying behaviour, staff are swift in dealing with such situations. They engage young people to promote their understanding of their behaviour, sometimes leading to a satisfactory resolution. Where conflict remains, staff are vigilant and closely monitor and supervise young people to prevent such behaviour and protect their welfare.

24-hour management plans are in place, which comprehensively assess young people's specific needs across all aspects of their daily life. Detailed behaviour management strategies guide staff in managing young people's difficult behaviour with appropriate measures to keep them safe and minimise potential harm. Staff receive training in using physical intervention. They are skilled in de-escalation techniques and use physical intervention only as a last resort and when necessary as a safeguarding measure. Staff discuss such incidents with young people and with managers to reflect and analyse such incidents to inform future strategies. Staff employ sanctions suitably to deal with inappropriate behaviour but records do not demonstrate that staff are fully considering the effectiveness of the measure as part of the behaviour management strategy. Staff provide young people with opportunities to discuss an appropriate response to the behaviour, thus encouraging young people to appreciate the consequences of their actions and take personal responsibility.

Effective health and safety measures are in place to protect young people and staff from the risk of harm. Staff implement regular fire safety checks and fire drills with additional fire drills when a new young person arrives to live at the home. Robust recruitment procedures safeguard young people and ensure that only appropriate adults care for young people.

Leadership and management

good

The manager of the home, who has considerable childcare experience, has been in post since December 2013 and is registered with Ofsted. During this period of instability at the home, a senior manager and the Registered Manager are providing clear leadership for the staff team and supporting them to establish clear boundaries for young people. Morale amongst the staff team is high. Staff are working with a common purpose to keep young people safe and promote positive outcomes.

There have been six external complaints since the last inspection. In the main, these relate to young people's behaviour in the community and have been appropriately investigated and satisfactorily resolved. Young people's inappropriate behaviour is addressed and dealt with. One complaint related to the conduct of staff and this issue was referred to the appropriate authorities and fully investigated.

Appropriate action has been taken to address recommendations from the previous inspection. A redecoration and refurbishment plan is in place to improve the living environment for young people and redecoration is underway. Educational placements for young people are in place as soon as possible when they are newly resident or when their placement is confirmed. Access to records for monitoring purposes has improved.

The development plan for the home clearly outlines the areas for improvement and demonstrates the home's capacity for continual advancement, focusing on ways of improving young people's outcomes. The wider organisation's development objectives have a similar focus with the best interests of young people at the heart of planned and achievable targets.

Effective monitoring processes are in place to ensure the home continues to maintain high standards of care. Monthly monitoring visits take place regularly and the resultant detailed reports highlight any specific shortfalls. The visitor consults with young people, staff, professionals and parents to gain their views on the service. Managers monitor records and practice on an on-going basis and produce comprehensive reports, which are submitted to Ofsted.

Despite the challenges posed by the current group of young people, staff remain committed and focused in their tasks. Staff understand the particular needs of young people and provide consistent support to enable young people to make progress and feel safe. There are sufficient staff to meet young people's needs with staff working hard and with passion to provide high quality care for young people during periods of staff shortages. Staff receive appropriate training to work safely and effectively with young people. Support systems are in place for staff including regular individual supervision sessions and team meetings to develop staff practice. Recent focus has been on improving staff's recording skills and embedding key working as a crucial element in supporting young people to achieve their targets and the objectives within their care plans. Staff report they receive excellent support from managers and are very clear in relation to managers' expectations regarding keeping young people safe.

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.