

SC063116

Registered provider: Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a privately owned children's home for up to six children with social and emotional difficulties. Five children were living in the home at the time of the inspection.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since April 2012.

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 August 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 10 December 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/12/2024	Full	Good
25/10/2023	Full	Good
26/09/2022	Full	Good
02/03/2022	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff help children to develop trusting relationships, which are recognised as central to all care provided. Children describe feeling loved and cared for by the staff. These relationships provide children with a sense of belonging and form the foundation for the progress they make while living at the home.

Children view staff and the other children they live with as being part of one extended family. They speak with excitement about special occasions, such as birthdays and Christmas, where traditions are celebrated in ways that mirror that of family life. A particular highlight of the year is the home's annual holiday, which the staff invest significant effort into planning, ensuring it is a memorable and enjoyable experience for the children.

The home is well presented, with a bright and welcoming child-friendly atmosphere. Children are actively involved in decisions about how the home and their bedrooms are decorated, which is reflected in the unique colourful décor. Communal spaces are thoughtfully arranged to encourage play and shared experiences. Photographs of special occasions, awards and memorabilia are displayed throughout, adding to the homely feel.

There is a strong emphasis on play and enjoyment in the home, thoughtfully balanced with opportunities for learning. Staff are creative in planning activities that support children's development, often incorporating learning into playful experiences. Activities such as games, cooking and story time take place most days and are frequently requested by the children themselves.

Children are making good progress in areas such as speech, reading and developing their independence. Staff recognise and celebrate these achievements through praise and rewards, helping children to reflect on what they have accomplished and encouraging them to take pride in their progress.

Children know how to raise complaints, and they feel confident that any concerns would be listened to and taken seriously. They regularly express how happy they are living in the home and with the care they receive. One child rated the home and staff '100 out of 100', while another shared, 'It is just the best here; I love everything about it.'

Staff give careful consideration when supporting children to move on from the home. One child has successfully moved to foster care, while another has arrangements in place to return to live with family. Each move is planned individually, with gradual introductions and tailored support to help children prepare for and adapt to such a significant change. Endings are made positive and meaningful through goodbye meals, gifts and memory boxes or books that reflect their time in the home. Some children who have moved on continue to stay in touch with staff, highlighting the quality of relationships they have built.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Children feel safe where they live. They attribute this sense of safety not only to the physical environment of the home, but also to the consistent care and presence of the staff who support and protect them.

There have been no safeguarding incidents during this inspection period. Despite this, staff continue to demonstrate a strong understanding of safeguarding procedures and remain vigilant to potential risks affecting children. Regular safeguarding discussions and training provides the staff with the knowledge and confidence needed to respond effectively to any concerns.

Children identify staff as being among the trusted adults they would talk to if they had any worries. They describe staff as approachable and responsive, and say that when they raise concerns, staff listen and take timely action to support them. Staff are trained in the use of physical intervention, which is only ever used as a last resort to safeguard children from harm. Since the last inspection, no such interventions have been necessary. This is a testament to the staff's detailed understanding of each child's individual needs and behaviours. Staff are skilled in recognising early signs of escalation and consistently use proactive strategies, such as distraction and calming techniques, to prevent situations from reaching crisis point.

Children understand what is expected of them and describe house rules that promote kindness and respect. However, there is some confusion around the use of 'time out' as a behaviour support strategy. While staff view it as a tool to help children regulate their emotions, children often describe this as being used as a consequence. This difference in understanding has led to children being unclear of the purpose and duration of time out, meaning it has not always been experienced as a restorative approach.

Individual risk assessments are in place for all children and are regularly reviewed to ensure they remain effective. These are supported by behaviour and management plans which guide staff on the agreed strategies in place for each child. For one child, staff identified their main risk to be in relation to stranger awareness. Although this is informally managed through staff's understanding of the child, there was no specific risk assessment in place. Consistent staffing has ensured that this risk is well managed. However, the absence of a formalised approach could present challenges for new staff, who may not have the same level of knowledge about the child.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is led by an experienced and dedicated registered manager, who sets high standards for the care that is to be provided to the children. Their leadership is grounded in a solid understanding of each child's background, experiences and individual needs, ensuring care is personalised.

The manager can clearly describe the positive progress children make as a direct result of the care and support they receive. This insight reflects not only their oversight of the home, but also their active involvement in day-to-day practice.

Staff speak positively of the support and guidance they receive from the manager. This support is provided through informal day-to-day discussions and planned supervisions. These forums provide staff opportunities to raise any concerns, reflect on their practice and identify areas for professional development.

Staff describe a positive and supportive work environment. They work well together with a shared focus on making sure children have safe and enjoyable experiences. Staff take pride in their roles and feel appreciated by both the manager and their colleagues. Staff turnover is low, with many of the staff having worked in the home for several years. This stability is largely attributed to the manager's leadership and the positive work culture they have developed. This consistency benefits both the staff and the children.

Children's views are regularly sought and acted on. Staff use a range of approaches to seek children's wishes and feelings, including informal conversations, children's meetings and consultation forms. These methods give children opportunities to share their thoughts, raise concerns and comment on their care. Children say they feel listened to and that their views are included in decisions made about them.

Safeguarding professionals report to be kept regularly updated and involved in decisions made about children. They speak positively of both the care provided and the relationships they have with the staff. One child's social worker shared the following, 'They are brilliant and very easy to work with. I am updated about [the child's] day-to-day life, when they are struggling and also when things are going well for them.'

The manager feels well supported by the senior manager and reports to receive regular supervision. However, a record of these discussions has not been shared with the manager for a considerable period. This makes it difficult for the manager to track decisions made, particularly those relating to their own development and the direction of the home.

Since the last inspection, there has been minimal improvement to the external and internal monitoring systems. These systems remain ineffective in supporting the home's development. Although routinely completed, these are not being used in a meaningful way to evaluate the quality of support provided, or to identify areas of improvement for the home.

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, The 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.

Requirements	Due date
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. A visit by the independent person to the home may be unannounced. 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. The independent person's report may recommend actions that the registered person may take in relation to the home and timescales within which the registered person must consider whether or not to take those actions. (Regulation 44 (1) (3) (4)(a)(b) (5)) In particular, the responsible person should ensure that visits by the independent visitor provide effective oversight and support improvement for the home.	26 September 2025
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— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; help each child to understand how to keep safe;	12 September 2025

have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(vii))	
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Recommendations

- A record of supervision should be kept for staff, including the manager. The record should provide evidence that supervision is being delivered in line with regulation 33(4)(b). ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)
- The registered person should ensure they consider what information or data recorded in the home will form part of their 6 monthly review of the home. The review should enable the registered person to identify areas of strengths and possible weakness, which should be evidenced in report. The report should clearly identify any actions required for the next 6 months and how those actions will be addressed. The whole review process and subsequent report should be used as a tool for continuous improvement in the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.4)
- The registered person should prepare and implement a behaviour management policy. This policy should describe the agreed approach to promoting positive behaviour. The registered person should ensure that all incidents of discipline are subject to systems of regular scrutiny to ensure this is fairly used and understood. Any sanctions used to address poor behaviour should be restorative in nature, to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the staff caring for them and the wider community. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 46, paragraphs 9.33- 9.38)

Information about this inspection

The inspector has looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, 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: SC063116

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited

Registered provider address: Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited, 17 Leigh Road, Ramsgate, Kent CT12 5EU

Responsible individual: Leslie Davenport

Registered manager: Kerri Matthews

Inspector

Kerry Howarth, Social Care Inspector

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