

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC063116
Inspector	Graham Robinson
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	Kerri Matthews
Date of last inspection	27/03/2014

Inspection date	17/12/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	None

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	outstanding
Outcomes for children and young people	outstanding
Quality of care	outstanding
Keeping children and young people safe	outstanding
Leadership and management	outstanding

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	outstanding
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This is an outstanding children's home that currently works very successfully with young people from a specific age group. On admission, young people are often in crises due to deprivation and a lack of care. As a result, life for them can be chaotic, with many lacking basic social skills, whilst experiencing a lifestyle that is socially unacceptable.

Young people benefit from moving into a warm, nurturing environment where they receive a high level of attentive care, in a structured environment that meets their needs. Placements are long-term, but not permanent. An effective matching process regarding referrals ensures compatibility within the peer group. The home has a successful history of sustaining placements, re-engaging young people back into education and community life, whilst at the same time developing social skills.

A particular strength of the home is in recognising that as young people grow older, they reach a point where their needs change and expand. This results in young people being prepared to move to more permanent placements in a structured, controlled and positive way, once the aims and goals of this placement have been achieved.

Young people respond positively to the structure of the home and the boundaries

laid out for them. The warm, nurturing environment, underpinned by the high level of care allows young people to feel safe and secure. Although individually, young people pose challenges, this is a home where potential disruptive behaviour is dealt with pro-actively and sensitively. This is based on the strong and trusting relationships which develop between staff and young people. As a result, young people thrive socially, emotionally, physically and educationally.

Young people like living at the home and are all settled in their placements. They understand why boundaries are in place and usually adhere to them. They feel well looked after and supported by a dedicated staff team who they get to know well. This provides them with a high consistency of care. This is recognised by young people, with one saying, 'I love (the manager) and the staff especially my key worker. I learn lots of things in the house like how to be a better person.' Another summed up his placement to the inspector simply by saying; 'It's all good.'

When discussing their working relationship with the home, the social worker of one young person says, 'The level of communication is very good. I receive prompt reports of any incident by e-mail.' When discussing the positive changes made by their child, the social worker says; 'He used to copy adult behaviour he had been exposed to, but has now tapped into being a child.'

Young people are all at different points of their journey through the home. However, the positive feedback given to the inspector by young people shows they are well settled into their placement. They embrace an enjoyable, alternative lifestyle to the one they may have experienced prior to admission. As a result they socialise more appropriately, gain new experiences which lead them into developing new hobbies and interests and re-engage positively with their education.

The home is well organised and managed by an experienced manager who has a clear sense of direction regarding the development of the home. This is reflected in the high quality monitoring of the home, both internally and externally. This is translated into effective planning for the future, which is reflected in the home's development plans.

This inspection has not raised any major areas of concern and the report contains no requirements or formal recommendations.

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 a maximum of six children, who may have emotional and behavioural difficulties. Children living in the home are able to access education through separately registered provision which is managed by the same organisation. Therapy or counselling is also available to children if this is appropriate.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/03/2014	Interim	good progress
06/11/2013	Full	outstanding
26/03/2013	Interim	good progress
09/10/2012	Full	good

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **outstanding**

Outcomes for young people are outstanding. Young people consistently prosper socially, emotionally and educationally. This is underpinned by the structured, yet nurturing and supportive environment created through a family group model, which is proving to be so successful for this home. The stability of placements where individuality is recognised and supported, gives young people a feeling of worth and belonging, which supports the progress they make.

This is a view supported by a range of external professionals who shared their views about the home. One says; 'I have seen so many positive changes in a relatively short period such as he can ride in a car safely, go on community based activities and he will now stay in class.' Another says; 'He is really, really happy with the placement, the home is turning him around. Its done wonders for him'

Contact arrangements for young people can be complex and sometimes stressful and unsettling. However areas of agreed and approved contact are fully supported by staff, who work flexibly to meet individual needs and requirements. For example, staff assist with supervised contact. Young people confirm they are well supported by staff and raised no issues or concerns about the arrangements in place. This results in young people's contact arrangements being well met.

Based on their starting points, young people's educational outcomes are outstanding. Although many young people came to the home with a history of failing to engage with education, each one is in full time education at schools within the community. Education is promoted positively with early morning and late afternoon routines structured accordingly. For example, getting ready for school and completing homework. Attendance levels at school are excellent, which promotes educational achievement. Going to school consistently not only improves educational attainment, but gives young people their own sense of achievement, as well as developing their social networks effectively.

Young people enjoy good health and their health needs are being promoted positively. Everyday health needs are being well met through a range of community-based health services, giving young people access to day-to-day health support. The homes willingness to advocate strongly for young people, along with well established links, allows for any specialist input that may be required, to be provided. Health needs and requirements are identified in planning documentation, which is reviewed and updated regularly to ensure individual health needs are assessed and fully met.

Young people participate in planning menus and where appropriate, with shopping and food preparation. They are encouraged to try unfamiliar foods, appreciate different cultures and try international cuisine. Festivals and religious events are

regularly celebrated. A healthy lifestyle, with a strong emphasis on fitness and diet is promoted consistently. Young people do not smoke, take drugs or drink alcohol. Collectively and individually, they enjoy significant improvements to their general health and fitness levels.

The home is well established within the community and encourages young people to contribute positively to the community they live in. This is achieved through supporting charities and in making full use of the local facilities available to them. As a result, young people develop a wider perspective of life in recognising there are others in need of help who are less well off than themselves. Photographs displayed around the home record events as well as reflect and celebrate the personal achievements experienced by young people.

The young age range of the children who live in the home, means that formal preparation for independence is not an area being addressed. However, young people are expected to develop skills and take on certain responsibilities which contribute to daily life in the home. For example, by keeping bedrooms tidy and learning how to use the washing machine. Young people are included in daily routines such as clearing up after meals. This helps to develop a young person's sense of responsibility as well as developing skills which will be beneficial in later life.

Quality of care

outstanding

Young people receive an outstanding quality of care. This view is supported by young people and their family members who recognise the support provided and the progress made. For example, in responding to a question about why they like living in the home, one young person says; 'Because I can trust staff and in the past I have been hurt and lied to and staff tell the truth to me and I can rely on them.' The parent of a young person supports this view by saying; 'His progress while he has been at the home has been amazing.'

Young people respond positively to the staff who look after them, resulting in strong, trusting relationships and attachments being formed. High levels of communication and regular consultation is a feature of daily life. Due to their complex and deep-rooted needs, young people do present serious challenges to staff on occasions. However, serious conflict and uncontrollable behaviour is extremely rare due to the skills of the staff team, along with their knowledge of each young person's individual needs. A pro-active approach, underpinned by reasoning and constant support, helps to dispel anger and frustration. This allows young people to develop greater tolerance and acceptance of other people's needs and point of view.

Young people have free access to the relevant information around complaints and children's rights, with helplines and contact details for external agencies well publicised. Young people confirm they are confident to make complaints if they feel the need to do so. However, such is their confidence and trust in staff, that young

people prefer to speak with staff regarding any issues of concern they have, where these issues are amicably resolved.

This is a reflection of the on-going consultation within the home which stems from the excellent levels of communication that exists between young people and staff. Along with the informal consultation that takes place daily, young people are consulted formally through a series of questionnaires and regular meetings. As a result, young people have the confidence to make suggestions, choices and express opinions, which contribute positively to life within the home. This gives young people some empowerment to control certain aspects of their own daily lives.

Individual needs, areas of risk and strategies to address those needs and risks, are reflected in a series of high quality planning documents. Plans are regularly reviewed and updated to keep them current. Staff ensure young people understand the plans in place for them and have input into them through regular key worker sessions. Since the previous inspection the home has introduced weekly updates that are sent to social workers and parents. This is deemed to be an outstanding example of the home's continuing desire to improve both the quality of care and outcomes for young people. When read collectively, all these documents provide an excellent insight into the areas of progress and development, as well as areas still to be worked on.

The home creates a warm, welcoming, child friendly environment, where staff and young people actively enjoy each other's company. The standards of repair and quality of equipment, fixtures, furnishings and décor are high. Young people take pride in their bedrooms which are personalised to reflect their own taste. Young people are seen to be at ease and relaxed in their environment, where photographs, mementos and personal belongings displayed around the home, reflect their positive experiences.

Play is an area of strength in this home and is a key component on which the ethos, culture and working practices of the home are based. Young people play with staff and with each other, developing practical and social skills, as well as helping them to appreciate the benefits of social order. The facilities for play in the home are excellent.

Young people are also provided with a wide range of meaningful activities that not only gives them new experiences, but often leads them towards taking up a new hobby or developing a new interest. For example, by joining groups such as cubs, scouts, St Johns Ambulance, swimming and local football clubs. This helps young people to develop greater self-confidence as well as expanding their social networks.

Keeping children and young people safe **outstanding**

The arrangements to protect and keep young people safe are outstanding. Young people are well supervised both within and outside the home and do not get themselves into situations where they are at serious risk. There have been no incidents of a safeguarding nature since the previous inspection. Staff are well trained, with regular refresher training being undertaken and they understand their role and responsibilities in keeping young people safe.

Although for young people, bullying in the home is not an area of concern to them, staff are very aware of each young person's potential to bully or be bullied. It is an area spoken about openly and regularly in the home. For example, bullying was an area for discussion at a recent young people's meeting. Young people confirm staff are always around to ensure arguments do not escalate into bullying incidents, which gives them a sense of security. One young person reflected the collective view of his peers by saying about the home; 'This is the safest place I have ever lived in.'

Young people have not been and do not go missing from the home. However the home works collectively and effectively with external agencies to meet the needs of young people. For example, a representative from the police says of the home; 'They manage the children really well.'

Disruptive and challenging behaviour, leading to serious behaviour management incidents where police become involved, is not a feature of this home. The pro-activity of staff, underpinned by the strong, trusting relationships developed between staff and young people, means that any behaviour management incidents that occur are well managed. All incidents are monitored thoroughly both internally and externally ensuring that appropriate evaluation of incidents is taking place. However, the overall ethos and culture of the home is to work through challenges and difficulties supportively, rather than punitively. As a result, young people feel they are treated fairly.

Young people are looked after by a stable staff team that has had few changes since the previous inspection, giving them a continuity and consistency of care they benefit from. Appropriate recruitment and clearance procedures, which reflect current good practice, are in place to ensure that any new staff are suitably cleared prior to taking up their posts. The home also has a policy of re-checking staff every 3 years, which ensures young people are only being looked after by suitably cleared people.

A comprehensive range of risk assessments linked to individual activities as well as general hazards, protect young people. They understand how to exit the home in an emergency. Safety checks to maintain a safe environment are regularly undertaken, with appropriate service contracts in place to ensure emergency and domestic equipment is safe.

The organisation and management of the home is outstanding. The home is managed by a dedicated, highly motivated, child focussed manager who is experienced and suitably qualified. She is well supported through the external management structure that oversees the home. Staff are supportive of the ethos and culture built up in previous years. The manager has high expectations of the staff team, which is reflected in the high quality of care being given to young people.

The support, supervision and appraisal of staff is taking place consistently, with staff reporting they feel well supported by the manager. The staff team is suitably experienced and all apart from those still in their probationary period, have either gained, or are about to gain a suitable professional qualification. An active, on-going staff training programme helps to keep knowledge updated and current, as well as developing and maintaining skills which are effective in meeting young people's diverse and complex needs.

The overall monitoring of the home is excellent, with both internal and external monitoring taking place consistently. Monitoring reports are of a high quality. They are detailed, evaluative and contain elements of quality assurance, which helps to ensure practice is accountable. Young people contribute to monitoring and can discuss their views. Information from monitoring exercises is used in part, to populate the written development plan for the home, which identifies areas of strength and areas to be improved.

The home's record of compliance is excellent. Following the previous inspection one recommendation has been carried over. This has been addressed positively resulting in improvements with regard to fire drills being undertaken at night-time. Since then the home has continued to move forward and progress, with a number of new initiatives being introduced. For example, with the introduction of thank you sessions to complement the sorry sessions that take place regularly between young people and staff. Young people, with the help of staff are now putting together a photographic and written record of the good times and achievements they have experienced during their stay in the home. These are memories they can take with them when they leave. The home has also got a new vehicle to transport young people and staff to school and for leisure use.

This home is relatively unique in the way it is set up and organised. The vision to provide young people with high levels of care in a warm, nurturing environment, which allows them to re-establish their childhood is meeting with considerable success. As a result, young people form strong, trusting relationships with appropriate adults and develop a more socially acceptable lifestyle, which includes re-engaging positively with their education. This allows them to get to a stage where more permanent, family based plans can be considered for them in the future.

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.