

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	18 May 2016
Unique reference number	SC063116
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	Kerri Matthews
Inspector	John Pledger

Inspection date	18 May 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	Outstanding
The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the home contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help, protection and care.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding

SC063116

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is outstanding because:

- Children enjoy a high level of care because leadership and management in this home has established a strong and clear culture that consistently combines structure, boundaries and routine with warmth, care and unconditional positive regard. There is a strong belief that children can make progress and overcome difficulties. These factors combine to provide an environment in which children with complex needs typically make significant and sustained progress in all areas of their development and difficulty.
- Children display a sense of pride and ownership in this home which in turn places them at its heart. The warm and consistent culture enables children to be themselves and discover their potential.
- All aspects of the home's maintenance and decor reflect a focus on the worth and well-being of each child. Knowledgeable and motivated staff create a stable and warm home environment that enables children to trust and form attachments. Children are kept safe and feel safe. One child said, 'I like it here because the adults keep us safe.'
- The highly cohesive staff team, inspired by the registered manager, works consistently in the belief that children can thrive and achieve in an environment of positive parenting that combines clear and consistent boundaries with warmth and positive regard.
- Staff demonstrate a detailed understanding of each child. Excellent communication within the team about their changing needs is strongly supported by a high standard of record-keeping.
- Meticulous care is taken to meet the full range of children's health and well-being needs. Staff expect children to achieve and make progress and ensure that the relevant external agencies are fully engaged in this process.
- Children improve in all areas of their development. A rich and wide range of resources, activities and events encourage children to enjoy themselves and embrace their childhood. A child said, 'This is my home. This is where I live. We have fun here'.
- The process of children moving on to their planned next stage is embraced and proactively managed by the home in a creative and sensitive manner, with children's needs at the forefront.

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

Recommendations

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

the statement of purpose should be reviewed to more accurately reflect the home's successful model of care. This process should be used by the leadership as a staff training and development activity to embed the model of care in the practice of staff. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 53, paragraph 10.11)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for a maximum of six children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. In accordance with its statement of purpose, the home specifically accommodates boys.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27 January 2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
21 October 2015	Full	Outstanding
26 February 2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
17 December 2014	Full	Outstanding

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
Children with a history of disrupted backgrounds and early trauma profit greatly from an environment that has clear structures, rules and routines. These are supported and enforced by a skilled and nurturing staff group which is also able to consistently express genuine warmth and care. Skilled staff practice lowers children's defences and encourages the normal expression of emotions and the development of trust and attachment. Children's access to learning increases and their social skills improve. Children display affection for the staff. Most children express confidence in approaching any staff member if they feel troubled. One child said, 'I like them all – it doesn't make any difference to me.' Children are expected to make progress in all areas of their functioning and some do so quickly. A placing authority social worker said of one child less than three months into his placement, 'He has shown such a big improvement in such a short time – he is like a changed boy.' A child still struggling in the early stages of his placement said, 'I hated it when I first came here and wanted to leave but now I like it'. A staff member commented, 'This is not a home, it's their home'. Children enjoy the strong emphasis on play and activities in the home and make very little use of electronic and digital games and activities. A creative and well-equipped games room with a wide range of board and other games is very well utilised. This provides opportunities for children to learn through play and to understand social norms such as sharing and supporting each other. Children respond well to the established routines in the home. These include sitting at the dining table when they come home from school and completing their homework or doing additional work if they have none. Staff are on hand and children naturally request help and guidance. Value is placed on reading and learning. Consequently, children have high aspirations and plans about their futures. One child said, 'I want to be a chemistry teacher.' Another explained, 'I hope to go back into foster care in a year but I will still be allowed to come back and visit.' Daily routines and activities are used to give children the opportunity to develop their social skills. Mealtimes are shared around the dining table, together with staff members. Children sit in their preferred places and readily engage in animated	

discussions about their day. They enjoy a planned and much anticipated summer holiday together each year. This promotes feelings of belonging and attachment.

Children feel valued and respond well to the genuine interest that staff show in understanding and responding to their wishes and feelings. Children are supported and encouraged to understand issues relating to their care. Child-friendly documentation and the co-signing of documents, including all restraint debriefs, is normal practice. The home has devised its own child-friendly and independently completed wishes and feelings report for children that promotes their participation in care reviews.

Children are listened to. Regular house meetings are held and children make meaningful contributions to the running of the home. All meetings are properly recorded to a high quality in a child-friendly manner. This activity reinforces children's sense of ownership in the life of the home as well as affirming their sense of worth.

The norms and structure established in the home encourage children to regulate their own behaviour. During a recent house meeting, two longer placed children offered to help new children and said, 'We will help them to understand the rules of the house and the right behaviours.' The home contributes to the development of children's identity and they feel very positive about where they live. They are very interested in the inspection process and its outcome because they feel that is also about them.

Children feel cared for and supported when going through the transition from the home to other places of care. Given the usual young age of children coming into the home, transitions are regarded as normal and are openly discussed. The planned process is extremely well managed by the home. There is a very clear and healthy attitude towards children moving on and planned transitions to family or foster care are regarded as very positive outcomes. Creative and proactive methods make transitions predictable and understood for children, who are well supported through this critical emotional journey.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
The safety and well-being of children are given the highest possible consideration. Potential risks and hazards for children are very well understood by staff. Relevant and clear plans are in place to address these. Potential hazards and risks in the local area are very well understood. The home's	

locality risk assessment reliably informs staff about how to keep children safe outside the home in a planned manner. There is a very proactive approach to children going missing and although this has not happened for over a year, there is regular liaison with the local police who have been provided with profiles of the children to facilitate the best possible response, should the need arise.

All staff have completed mandatory as well as additional safeguarding training and this is regularly updated. All staff have also undergone training on child sexual exploitation as well as radicalisation. Staff display good awareness of child sexual exploitation risks and this is reflected in children's risk assessments. The children are young and all internet activity is fully supervised by staff and appropriate e-safety is practised.

The personal safeguarding needs of each child are clearly and specifically addressed in a relevant range of individualised risk assessments. These records are accessible, updated in response to change and regularly overseen by the registered manager. These personalised plans enable staff to understand risk and they take proactive steps to reduce levels of risk in the specifically identified areas. There is continuous work with one child who has very low levels of self-protection in relation to strangers.

Staff understand safeguarding risks and manage these effectively. This allows children to participate fully in positive activities outside the home.

Children are kept safe from harming themselves and others. As a very last resort, physical restraint techniques are applied in a proportionate manner and follow planned de-escalation efforts. Staff debriefing is within timescales, as are child reviews, which are all signed by the child. Children and staff are given proper opportunity to reflectively discuss events afterwards. This enables children and staff to move on after incidents, learn lessons and develop strategies to reduce the need for further restraint.

Staff recruitment is safe and completed with rigour. A recent staff recruitment process reflects a thorough and systematic approach with no gaps in information and full reference checks.

There have been two notifications since the last inspection. The one incident involves an allegation against a staff member. The actions taken show the full and proper implementation of safeguarding procedures and appropriate steps being taken, including the involvement of the local designated officer. The matter was properly concluded with the staff member being exonerated and returned to full duties. No complaints have been recorded since the last inspection.

All children express feeling safe in the home as well as when they go out. This is an important element of why children like living in the home. One child said, 'I like it here because the adults keep us safe and they care about us.'

Children are well protected from regulated risks within the home. Full health and safety procedures and provisions are in place and the relevant checks are carried out and recorded. The frequency of some checks and drills exceeds the normal requirements.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
Strong and effective leadership contributes substantially to the safety, happiness and progress of the children. Leaders and managers place the well-being and progress of children as their highest priority. The fully qualified registered manager, who has been in post for over 4 years, is inspirational, confident and ambitious for children and plays a pivotal role in changing their lives. Her drive and passion and collaborative leadership style inspires staff to do their best and promote a common sense of purpose and a high level of teamwork. Leaders have a very clear understanding of the individual needs of children and display a fierce resolve to secure these when external services are required. This results in a comprehensive and coordinated approach to achieving the best possible outcomes for children. Effective monitoring systems are in place. New staff are hand-picked from the organisation's wider recruitment practice and introduced into the team in a careful and considered manner. A recent new staff member spoke of her careful and thorough induction programme. She said, 'I felt part of the team right from the start.' Staff feel positive about what they do and are proud of the excellent outcomes that are achieved for children. Staff feel valued and are sustained by regular and reflective supervision, which helps them to improve their practice and address issues that might affect their performance. The particular needs of individual children are effectively addressed because staff feel equipped to deal with these needs and display enthusiasm for learning and development. One experienced staff member said, 'I know enough but I don't know it all and learn something new every day.' Another remarked, 'It was amazing' when commenting on a recent session on attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder. Staff training and development is proactively planned and scheduled to minimise disruption in the home and maximise learning. The registered manager places a high priority on the attainment of the required qualification for residential support workers. All staff have either attained the	

required qualification or are in the process of completing this.

The maintenance and continuous improvement of standards of care for children is supported by a clear staff development plan. This shows good understanding of each staff member's qualifications and experience as well as meaningful planning for progress and development in the home. The current development plan includes improvements to the physical environment, staff responsibility development and a project for improving the child's experience of child in care reviews. The latest regulation 45 report shows a reflective use of information that feeds into improvement planning. Regulation 44 visits are carried out each month and reports are fully up to date. The registered manager appreciates this process and responds quickly to any actions set.

Leaders have enabled staff to have a strong, shared sense of purpose and to experience a sense of ownership in the ethos of the home. They feel confident and competent in their roles. This results in continuing effectiveness when the manager is absent from the home.

There have been a number of admissions to the home as well as other children having moved on since the last inspection. These admissions included two emergency short term placements just before Christmas 2015, with one child having very complex needs. Although it was short notice, the home's capacity to meet the needs of these children, as well as their impact upon the current children were properly considered. Strong leadership and a cohesive staff group enabled this to be a very positive experience for all the children. One child is reported as saying it had been the best Christmas that he had ever had.

Children benefit significantly from the positive and professional relationships that the home maintains with external agencies. The high standards of care set by the home encourage external agencies to be responsive, reliable and flexible. The registered manager said, 'We have quite good (local authority) social workers and some really good independent reviewing officers (IRO).' Managers have very clear and reasonable expectations of placing authorities and IROs and mostly have these met. A placing authority social worker said, 'They keep me updated, are always contactable and very cooperative and flexible about visits.'

Leaders and managers will not hesitate to challenge other services when these are insufficient for children and are tenacious in this regard. This is particularly the case when there is a view that a child's transition to other care is not being properly considered.

Although the home provides a successful model of care that is consistently applied, this is not adequately described in the statement of purpose. Furthermore, staff do not have a clear understanding of how their practice supports this model. Effective leadership action in this regard will improve staff's insight into their practice and strengthen sustainability of the service.

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 children 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 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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