

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	21/10/2015
Unique reference number	SC063116
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited
Registered person address	Ethelbert Specialist Homes, Cheesemans Farmhouse, Alland Grange Lane, Manston, RAMSGATE, CT12 5BZ

Responsible individual	Leslie Davenport
Registered manager	Kerri Matthews
Inspector	Sophie Wood

Inspection date	21/10/2015
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 exceeds 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 believe that they are the most important element of the home. Hence, they develop a soaring sense of self-worth, value and confidence in their developing personalities.
- Staff instil this culture through active listening, repetitive reassurance and an endless supply of second chances when mistakes are made. They say, 'our boys are still little and learning about right and wrong. They won't get it right all the time.'
- Children are successful in using all the home has to offer to form healthy attachments which take them into long term foster care or back home with their families. Staff say, 'they shouldn't be here any longer than is absolutely necessary.'
- Superb partnership working ensures children receive the range of services they need to make excellent progress. Staff understand their own roles and responsibilities and those of others. This results in appropriate external referrals being made and staff following and implementing expert guidance.
- Staff are able to describe children's needs and personalities in fine detail because they know them so well. Parents and social workers commend this aspect. A parent said, 'they have helped me to understand how best to manage my child' and a Social Worker said, 'after he moved on, I still had the home on speed dial to help me to support the foster placement.'
- Children develop a hunger for learning: every child has made solid progress in terms of their school attendance and achievements. Enquiring minds are being stimulated and encouraged through the provision of a wide range of enriching activities and experiences.
- The excellent décor, design and quality of the premises reflects the high value that the home places upon its occupants. From its entrance point and beyond, the home warmly welcomes visitors to be comfortable and at ease. It feels like a household full of active, happy and noisy children.

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):

review the practice of the locking of specific doors to ensure as far as possible, that a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression is maintained. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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
26/02/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
17/12/2014	Full	Outstanding
27/03/2014	Interim	Good progress
06/11/2013	Full	Outstanding

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Outstanding
Children thrive and make terrific progress because they are enabled to pick up their childhoods from when they were interrupted by adverse events. Staff remove unnecessary pressures and worries through excellent parental role modelling. They say, 'we have to take them back to being little before we can expect them to mend and move on.' Great emphasis is placed upon the provision of structured and reliable routines. Children understand the few rules and expectations and one child said, 'you have to listen to the staff because they are like your parents and want you to be safe and to do well.' New children quickly settle and learn to trust their environment, the staff and each other. During this inspection children were observed to actively seek out staff for help with homework, advice, an argument and a cuddle. One staff member said, 'once you get the whole range of emotions and behaviours, you know you are getting somewhere.' Children are demonstrating feelings of emotional security through their behaviours and actions. One child said, 'sometimes I get so angry but I talk to 'Big N' and he always helps me to feel better.' Play opportunities are central to the daily routines. Staff understand normal childhood development and use this knowledge in the care planning process. For example, targets may include learning to share, taking turns with board games and cooperating with a friend in building a model. The large, very well equipped games room is a highly valued resource: the boys simply play but the staff see it as a rich opportunity to observe behaviours and measure social progress. Electronic devices, play stations and internet based activities are given minimal time and energy. Staff say, 'we don't want couch potatoes. Our children are busy and physically active, developing their minds and out on bikes in the fresh air.' This ethos extends into the home's approach to education including homework. All of the children are in full-time school. For some, this is a huge achievement from their starting points. Key workers understand children's attainment and progress levels. They routinely liaise with teaching staff. A homework hour upon returning home at the end of the school day is embedded into the home's routine. Children say, 'if we haven't got actual homework, we still have to do work, like practising maths or things like that. I really like it when I get things right.' Children talk about their aspirations and dreams because they are inspired to aim high. Their comments include, 'I want to go to university when I'm older' and 'I don't want a	

boring job, I want a really good one.’ One child received additional support and tutor time in preparation for the 11+ test and further support with regards to the appeals process. Staff demonstrate a tenacious approach in advocating for children’s rights to access the best education provision. The home is currently liaising with the organisation’s own school as to how to best utilise pupil premium payments. This is another positive example of ensuring that children get the very best educational opportunities.

Busy, active children enjoy a wide range of physical activities. This is enabled by the local facilities and resources which are regularly accessed. Children say, ‘it’s great being so close to the beach’ and ‘four of us can’t swim, so we are all having lessons.’ Great emphasis is placed upon the quality and quantity of meals and snacks; demonstrated by an abundance of fruit being readily accessible combined with the strict monitoring of sugary foods and sweets. Over time, children have developed a well- informed awareness of their own physical health and how to take appropriate responsibility for it. Some children joined the home with extremely restricted diets and preferences. These children now say, ‘I eat much better now and I do actually like fruit.’ Other aspects of health promotion include discussions about smoking and drugs, relationships and sex education. An excellent example is an on-going group activity about sex and relationships. Staff say, ‘the boys are currently at the embarrassed and giggly stage of naming body parts, there is a long way to go!’

Children move into the home based upon explicitly clear placement planning. Staff and children understand the reasons for placements and this increases their chances of success. New children look to those who are preparing to move on as positive role models. They are surrounded by success and this fuels their desire to do the same. Consequently, subsequent placements are usually successful because the boys are well equipped and prepared for the next stage of their lives.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Outstanding
The comments made by children about their safety are overwhelmingly positive. They describe the staff as, ‘a bit strict, really kind’ and ‘always there to look after me.’ Given their age and understanding, the supervision and allocated staffing arrangements are very well understood and implemented by every staff member. Some children are learning to spend limited amounts of time alone whereas others receive almost constant supervision. The Registered Manager explains, ‘we have to respond flexibly and recognise where and when each child is able or not to cope with unstructured or unsupervised time.’ The staff team makes effective use of duty rosters, shift plans and risk assessments to ensure that only measured risks	

are taken which enable children to start making safe choices. One key worker says, 'he is so very vulnerable given his total trust in everyone and everything.' Consequently, this child's care plan targets and key working sessions are steeped in an educative approach about stranger danger and he does not currently have unsupervised time.

Other children place themselves at risk of potential harm through their challenging and sometimes aggressive behaviours. Clear and effective behaviour management plans successfully identify potential triggers and staff use their training to effectively de-escalate potentially volatile situations. At the same time, such children receive extensive key working sessions and where necessary, targeted counselling and therapy, in order to learn and develop better coping mechanisms. This approach sees a healthy reduction in staff's need and use of physical intervention techniques. Similarly, the use of sanctions and consequences are also extremely rare as children learn to effectively manage themselves.

The Registered Manager routinely reviews the home's location risk assessment. Staff understand its contents and impact upon the safety and welfare of the children. For example, specific local areas are avoided and meetings have been held with the local police to identify the potential risks of the children being targeted for sexual exploitation. This knowledge and understanding is further enhanced by the staff's regular attendance at refresher safeguarding and child protection training. No children have been absent or missing but staff remain vigilant in looking for potential concerns and being ready to swiftly respond.

No complaints or allegations have been made by children or third parties about the home or staff since the last inspection. Children are conversant with complaint's procedures; they know the independent visitor and speak knowledgeably about how and why they may wish to contact their social workers. One allegation, made by a child about an external provision, demonstrates how effectively the home works with other agencies and provides individually tailored support to children during such difficult times. This type of experience reinforces their trust in being believed and supported.

Robust recruitment procedures protect children from potentially unsafe adults. Further to thorough vetting processes, the Registered Manager is equally concerned with applicants' suitability in terms of their skills and experience to work with children. She describes herself as 'extremely fussy' with regards to staff selection and the core staff team is stable and long-serving.

Children live in safe and pleasant surroundings which afford appropriate levels of security. There is some historic use of locking specific doors and cupboards which nobody appears to mind or notice. However, there is no clear rationale to justify this current practice and it is recommended that this is reviewed. Health and safety checks with regards to the premises and fire safety are diligently completed, as are routine maintenance tasks. Everyone's on-going safety and welfare is assured.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding
The home is expertly led by a suitably qualified and experienced Registered Manager who has been in post for the last three and a half years. She holds NVQ 4 in Health and Social Care and in Management, she is registered for the Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management for Residential Childcare. She leads by example, in terms of her value of research and continuing professional development. While encouraging the team to undertake additional training and development opportunities, she is currently researching her own additional learning in terms of a 'play qualification' in order to further benefit the work of the home. These examples are demonstrative of the home's drive and desire to continually improve. Development plans are far reaching and at any given time, new ventures and systems are being trialled and tested. One example is the statement of purpose; although this is up-to-date and relevant, the team believes it could be better owned and influenced by the children. This is an active and on-going piece of work. The same energy and passion is invested in staff supervision, appraisal and development processes. The Registered Manager firmly believes in succession planning. Consequently, all staff work to clear targets, aims and objectives which sees their confidence and performance improve. A newly appointed senior describes being 'challenged and supported in equal measures' and newer staff refer to 'an excellent induction and great mentoring.' This totally committed and motivated team routinely monitors and evaluates its collective performance. The successes of the children are used as the key bench marks through regular staff meetings and in-house reviews of care plans. Records of such meetings show lively debates, innovative thinking and professional challenge. Children's meetings are a mirror image of this energy and enthusiasm, whereby they debate house rules, behavioural expectations, activities and daily routines. One child said, 'we moaned about our packed lunches so now we are making our own; serves us right I suppose!' During this inspection the children specifically requested a meeting with the inspector in order to contribute to the process. This was a confident group who expressed a real sense of pride, ownership and investment in their home. Diligent internal monthly monitoring checks are further complemented by the reports completed by the independent visitor. These processes identify areas for improvement and are shared openly with the staff. Constructive criticism is seized	

by the team as a positive challenge from which to improve. This culture is embedded and drives the team.

Significant financial investment results in a beautifully furnished, well decorated and homely environment. The children excitedly told the inspector about their competition to design a stained glass window and the proud winner's superb effort adorns the front door entrance. Excellent resources include staffing levels which reflect the needs of the children and on-going relevant training for these staff.

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 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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