

SC063116

Registered provider: Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately owned children's home provides care for up to six children with behavioural and mild learning difficulties, as well as some form of emotional trauma. At the time of the inspection there were six boys, aged between seven and 11 years old, living in the home. They all attend one of two schools run by the same provider.

Staff in this home are referred to as 'adults' and this is reflected in this report.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since April 2012.

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 September 2022

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: 2 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
02/03/2022	Full	Good
26/02/2019	Full	Outstanding
26/02/2018	Full	Outstanding
30/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This is a vibrant home with an atmosphere of care and loving concern for children. Children are, and know they are, the focus of attention for the adults in the home. As a result, they begin to trust those who care for them and allow them to help. Adults assist children to manage difficult feelings and rise to challenges that they have struggled to meet.

All children make progress. Some of the progress achieved has been remarkable, including improvements in school attendance and socialisation, and children managing their own behaviour.

Children feel that they are listened to and that adults will respond to their views whenever possible. Their personalities are particularly expressed in their bedroom decor and range of toys and books they have collected. They are proud of these and very pleased to show them to visitors.

Most children are involved in a sport or other recreational activity outside the home, so increasing their social circle and widening their interests. When this is not possible, a referral has been made for an independent visitor to see a child. This ensures that children have experiences and opportunities outside the home and school, which are both run by the same organisation.

Individual and joint activities, such as a recent holiday, have been very positive experiences and children have returned with lots of good memories. Each child has a box of memorabilia collected during their time in the home. This exemplifies the life-enhancing nature of living here.

Some children live a considerable distance from their families, but adults support visits for the children in accordance with the plans agreed with their placing authorities. Parents report that this works well. One said that the adult involved 'is amazing, understanding and easy to talk to'. She added that the worker 'looks after him [their child] really well'.

The homely, child-friendly atmosphere of the home is spoiled somewhat by the presence of cylinder locks on doors to communal rooms such as the kitchen and games room and by metal bars across some windows to prevent them from opening too far. The provider has plans to remove the bars. They had, however, not previously considered the locks as institutional or assessed if restricting access, albeit only at night, was in children's best interests.

Further, in a desire to keep children safe, door alarms are routinely operated at night for all children. Adults explain their use to children and the alarms are subject to risk assessments. However, these do not always demonstrate an identifiable risk, but indicate a more general approach to how children are monitored at night. This may lead children to fear they are not safe without alarms and does not prepare them for life in a family home.

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

Adults are in tune with children's moods and are they are skilled in meeting needs as they see them arising. They act on subtle body language or knowing that a particular event is difficult for a child. Responses include giving individual attention, calming or diverting to another activity.

The recently revised safeguarding policy underpins practice in the home. The manager and adults understand children's individual vulnerabilities and take account of them when planning activities or going out in the community. Although it has been a long time since any child has gone missing from the home, adults are aware of this possibility and understand well the protocol to follow for each child.

Consistent boundaries and expectations contribute to children feeling secure. Occasionally, the behaviour of another child or a feeling of being overwhelmed by their own feelings may temporarily make a child feel unsafe. However, the fact that adults can support them emotionally and occasionally physically means that this is the exception. As a result, relationships between children that could potentially involve conflict are well managed so that children learn to cooperate with each other.

When physical interventions are used, they are recorded well, and the manager discusses their use with the adults involved. Children are also spoken to but this is often about how they might have acted differently rather than their experience of the restraint. This means that insights from the child's perspective, that could inform practice, are not obtained. The manager and adults have developed a non-punitive approach to behaviour management. This focuses extensively on rewarding positive conduct and re-enforcing expectations when they are not met. Consequences are rarely, if ever, used. However, the current behaviour management policy does not adequately reflect this excellent practice.

The provider has not consistently ensured that all information required by regulation in regard to the recruitment of employees has been obtained or accurately recorded. A similar issue was identified during the last inspection, resulting in a recommendation; a requirement is raised on this occasion.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has high expectations for the home and the children who live here. Her lead is readily followed by the other adults. The manager has a detailed knowledge of children's circumstances, needs and progress. Action is taken to help children meet planned outcomes, especially when children need additional support.

Adults believe that a positive and supportive environment enables them to work as a team and improve practice together. This includes mentoring colleagues, with the aim of ensuring recording is of a consistently high standard.

Professionals speak highly of the level of communication they have with the home and the welcome they receive when they visit. Social workers and parents say that adults are helpful in promoting their own relationships with the children. One commented, 'I'm given space to talk with my child and the manager is on hand to support when needed.'

An inspection report from February 2019 commented on shortfalls in how the quality of care reviews are presented. This has still not been fully addressed. The provider has begun a review of how they meet this regulation. However, given the lack of progress over the last three years, a requirement is made following this inspection.

At the last inspection, it was found that the independent person's report failed to include any recommendations or actions. Recommendations have been made since but reports still lack sufficient challenge or evaluation of practice. Consultation with others is also limited, meaning that the report does not give a rounded view of care provided in the home.

Nevertheless, the home is ably led and is meeting the aims and objectives set out in the statement of purpose. As a result, children are significantly benefiting from living in a home that is helping them recover from significant trauma and/or the experience of several placement breakdowns. This has led to parents, adults in the home and children themselves being proud of what they have achieved.

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, 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.

Requirement	Due date
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only employ an individual to work at the children's home; or if an individual is employed by a person other than the registered person to work at the home in a position in which the individual may have regular contact with children, allow that individual to work at the home, if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(d))	31 October 2022
The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if— the monitoring or surveillance is no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child's need for privacy. (Regulation 24 (1)(d)) This is particularly in relation to ensuring that a bedroom door alarm is only used when assessments demonstrate that there is an identifiable risk relating to an individual child.	31 October 2022
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out how appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the children's home; and the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. Within 5 days of the use of a measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b) (3)(c))	31 October 2022
The registered person must complete a review of the quality of care provided for children ("a quality of care review") at least once every 6 months. In order to complete a quality of	31 October 2022

care review the registered person must establish and maintain a system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating— the quality of care provided for children; the feedback and opinions of children about the children’s home, its facilities and the quality of care they receive in it; and any actions that the registered person considers necessary in order to improve or maintain the quality of care provided for children. The system referred to in paragraph (2) must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of children, their parents, placing authorities and staff. (Regulation 45 (1) (2)(a)(b)(c) (5))	
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children’s home at least once each month. When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person— if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires; and to inspect the premises of the home and such of the home’s records (except for a child’s case records, unless the child and the child’s placing authority consent) as the independent person requires. 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) (2)(a)(b) (3) (4)(a)(b) (5))	30 November 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children should be able to access all shared areas of their home unless there are specific reasons why this would not meet a child's needs. Limits on privacy and access may only be put in place to safeguard each child in the home. All decisions should be informed by a rigorous assessment of that individual child's needs, be properly recorded and be kept under regular review. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.10)
- The registered person should ensure that, when considering whether restraint is warranted, adults in the home consider the method of restraint which would be appropriate in the specific circumstances. In particular, behaviour management plans should indicate the preferred hold or holds to be used with a child, should they be required. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.55)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have 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: 17 Leigh Road, Ramsgate, Kent CT12 5EU

Responsible individual: Leslie Davenport

Registered manager: Kerri Matthews

Inspector

Chris Peel, Social Care Inspector

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