

1246521

Registered provider: Hillcrest Children's Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a national private organisation and provides care to help children overcome the difficulties they have experienced and address any behavioural problems they may present with. It can accommodate up to 14 children across two houses, one for boys and girls between seven and 12 years old and the other for girls from 12 to 18 years. The home is set in a rural village location. Most children attend the organisation's school, located a short distance away.

There has been no registered manager in post since November 2018.

Inspection dates: 2 to 3 January 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **requires improvement to be good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 21 March 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: sustained effectiveness

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/03/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
27/09/2017	Full	Outstanding

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
In order to meet the positive relationships standard the registered person must ensure: that staff are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same. (Regulation 11 (2)(a)(x)) In particular, to state the frequency of supervision in the home's statement of purpose to ensure that staff have confidence in the support and training that they have to help traumatised children, and to manage the emotional impact of their work.	29/03/2019
If the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005(a) applies to the home the registered person must ensure that the requirements of that Order and any regulations made under it, except for article 23 (duties of employees), are complied with in respect of the home. (Regulation 25 (2)(b))	01/03/2019
The registered person must ensure that the independent person carrying out visits to the home only inspects a child's case records if the child and the child's placing authority consent. (Regulation 44 (2)(b))	01/03/2019

Recommendations

- For children's homes to be nurturing and supportive environments that meet the needs of their children, they will, in most cases, be homely, domestic environments. Children's homes must comply with relevant health and safety legislations (alarms, food hygiene etc.); however in doing so, homes should seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

In particular, not to restrict children's access to communal rooms other than to safeguard their welfare and to avoid institutional measures of discipline, such as sitting quietly before being allowed into the dining room.

- The registered person should work with the placing authority to ensure that each

child's transition is planned and help each child to prepare for leaving both practically and emotionally. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 57, paragraph 11.9)

In particular, ensure that transition arrangements and how they are implemented for children who leave under notice are well documented.

- The responsible person must take such general fire precautions as will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety of any employees; and in relation to relevant persons who are not employees, take such general fire precautions as may reasonably be required in the circumstances of the case to ensure that the premises are safe. (The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 8(1) and (2))

In particular, not to allow repairs required to fire doors to be unreasonably delayed.

- Commissioners and providers of health or social care services should ensure that a robust process is in place for identifying, reporting, reviewing and learning from medicines errors involving residents. (Managing medicines in care homes, page 14, paragraph 1.5.1)

In particular, to ensure that managers' review of medication errors are documented and signed off.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The two houses that comprise this home have different age groups, focus and atmosphere but share a common approach and are staffed by people who have an enthusiasm for the work. The staff are knowledgeable about the children in their care and thoughtful about the way that they help them to manage their behaviour and sometimes overwhelming emotions.

One of the houses has routinely locked doors of communal rooms to ensure that children do not go into them when they should be elsewhere, rather than staff engaging and directing children. Children did not complain about this, but the practice detracts from the homely, nurturing environment and does not help children to accept and respond to the reasons for the desired behaviour. The other house allows free movement of children in the home other than for safeguarding reasons.

During the inspection, staff had children sit quietly outside the dining room before allowing them in, so as to stop boisterous behaviour. This had no direct ill effect but was a means of managing the group rather than identifying and assisting individual children to calm.

The houses are large in comparison to family homes, which means that staff must work hard to avoid them being institutional. All the children spoken to said that they liked living in the home, and some said that they loved it.

Both houses are well furnished, and bedrooms are decorated to reflect the character and

choices of the children occupying them. Damage is quickly rectified whenever possible, so that the environment remains attractive.

Relationships between children and staff are positive and all children asked could name a worker who they trusted and thought had made a difference to their lives at the home.

Managers and staff welcome children into the home very well. Visits are made to the child and staff take the time to get to know him or her, typically making sure that rooms are decorated in colours they like before they arrive. Young people are also prepared well for planned moves out of the home, with significant efforts to take into account the needs of the other children in the house and to maintain important relationships with adults after they have left. According to a social worker for a young person who moved out after managers had given notice, 'the home was accommodating' in giving additional time to find a suitable alternative placement. However, staff have not recorded how she was prepared as well as they had for those who moved under more planned arrangements.

One young person said, 'Staff make sure we are happy and have what we need.' Staff provide a lot of options for activities, both in the home and in the community. Staff actively promote children's interests, with some excelling in their chosen hobby. This gives them confidence, a drive to succeed and a well-deserved sense of achievement.

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

Some children need a lot of help to manage risky behaviour, but staff balance this against the need to allow the older ones to experience and cope with independence. They judge this well to avoid unacceptable levels of risk while also preparing young people for adulthood. Children have opportunities to quickly regain trust.

A few children expressed concern about staff holding them or seeing their peers being held. They mostly accept that this is to prevent people, including themselves, from getting hurt and it helps them when they lose control. Records of physical interventions show that they are proportionate, although it is not always clear what led to the behaviour that prompted the need to use a hold. Children's views are sought but because these are recorded separately it was not easy to link these to the incident during the inspection.

Reattunement forms give a structure to conversations between children and staff to mutually make amends when things have gone wrong and to help children to gain the skills to repair relationships. Key-work and group sessions help children to understand the consequences of their behaviour and to find alternative ways of managing conflict.

Children are well versed in what to do in the case of a fire and staff make regular inspections of fire equipment and precautions. However, checks of fire doors have found continuing problems with their operation or suitability for up to 19 months. Although managers have chased repairs or replacement the provider has been slow to act. Children and staff have not been affected so far, but if a fire occurred their safety could be compromised.

Staff are aware of the procedures to follow if they become aware of a safeguarding issue, including the role of the designated officer of the local authority.

Children know how to make a complaint and those who have made a complaint say that the matter was resolved satisfactorily.

Relationships forged with children are key to both the welfare and progress of children. One young person said, 'I didn't trust [a staff member] but now I can tell her things.'

Children spoke of how they have 'bounced off each other', leading to escalations in their behaviour and a parent and a professional were concerned about children learning challenging behaviours or unhelpful ways of coping from their peers. However, there is evidence that the number of incidents is reducing and that staff are managing this well.

Children feel safe with staff and those who have lived in the home for some time think that they have benefited from living here. For the older ones, this is particularly in gaining the skills to be independent and for the younger children, being able to enjoy new activities. Achievement logs record these successes and evidence progress made.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

There has been a well-planned transition from the home's old manager, including a handover period. Staff and children say that they appreciate his successor 'being on the floor' offering support and care.

Some staff feel that they need more support to manage the emotional impact of their work with severely traumatised children and acknowledgement from managers about the extent that they go to in supporting children. An outside professional believes that additional training would help the team to manage anxieties about children's behaviour that results from past experiences. Such developmental opportunities may help staff to feel more confident when facing stressful situations.

Nevertheless, permanent staff receive supervision four to six weekly. Bank workers have sessions depending on the number of shifts that they do. They can also ask to speak to a manager when they need. In addition, group sessions, handovers and debriefs add to the opportunities that they have to reflect on practice and to develop new ways of helping children. Managers help staff to reflect on their practice and to make improvements where required.

Case files are in good order, with placement plans, risk assessments and behaviour support plans in place, clearly recorded and addressing each child's individual issues. The latter has particularly clear contributions from children as to how they feel that staff can best help them to avoid unwanted behaviour or to calm afterwards.

Evidence of managers' oversight of incidents is sometimes lacking, for example when an error had been made in the administration of medicines. Staff were able to explain how particular mistakes had occurred, but this was not recorded on the relevant forms and there was no evidence that a manager had reviewed the matter. This means that opportunities to improve practice may have been missed.

Written permission is sought for the independent person who conducts Regulation 44 visits to view case files and for physical activities. However, several of these have not been completed correctly or not actually signed. This means that meaningful consent has not been obtained and explanations have not been given to those who should

understand what is happening to their information.

The team members have good relationships with other professionals that helps to meet the overall needs of children, particularly when working with parents and previous placements. Professionals have complimented staff on their efforts in this area. Some family members report that communication has been 'hit and miss' but that staff respond well when they raise the problem.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: 1246521

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Hillcrest Children's Services Limited

Registered provider address: Turnpike Gate House, Alcester Heath, Alcester,
Warwickshire B49 5JG

Responsible individual: Rodrigo Ferreira

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Chris Peel: social care inspector

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