

1246521

Registered provider: Hillcrest Children's Services Ltd

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. It provides care for up to 14 children across two houses. One house is for boys and girls aged between seven and 12 years, and the other is for girls aged from 12 to 18 years.

The manager registered with Ofsted in September 2019.

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 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	outstanding
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 22 June 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/06/2021	Full	Good
20/08/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
02/01/2019	Full	Good
21/03/2018	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children receive loving and attentive care from a skilled and committed staff team. Permanent, experienced staff are confident in their knowledge of individual children's needs and care is provided accordingly.

Children make good progress in all areas of their lives. Progress, no matter how small, is shared and celebrated by both staff and peers. For younger children, this can be as simple as losing a first tooth, whereas older children are supported to make age-appropriate choices and successes in school.

Children are supported by good relationships with key staff. There are regular opportunities for one-to-one time with trusted staff. Regular community meetings also take place that include all children across both houses. These are both educative and reflective and allow children to explore key themes both in the home and in wider society. Themes such as Black Lives Matter, the war in Ukraine and different religious celebrations are discussed. This supports children to understand the world they are growing up in.

Children's views that are shared in these meetings and in key-worker sessions are used to inform decisions which relate to their daily care, for instance the decoration of the home, meal choices, what they would like to do for hobbies and where to go on holiday.

Most children have positive endings to their time in the home. Memory scrapbooks are put together carefully, and this is combined with clear agreed transition plans. This has resulted in some good outcomes, with two children moving to foster care and two children moving back with family. One child had their placement ended abruptly. However, staff and leaders did all they could to make the transition positive and worked hard with external agencies to ensure that there was clear planning.

There have been some occasions when children have not been appropriately supervised by staff. This has left children vulnerable and resulted in several significant incidents occurring. Leaders have been thorough in their response to this. However, preventable incidents have occurred due to staff not responding effectively to children's known risks.

Agency staff play a significant part in ensuring that there are enough staff present to support the children. Some agency staff have not had the opportunity to fully develop meaningful and trusted relationships with the children. This results in established staff leading interactions with children, which reduces the opportunity for agency staff to build on relationships.

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

Detailed impact assessments ensure that risks are well known and understood before children move in. Plans to reduce risk are regularly updated and shared with staff, who demonstrate a good understanding of children's individual needs.

Children rarely go missing. When they do, the response by staff has been positive. This is because all children have clear protocols in place for staff to follow, which enables them to respond promptly and effectively and keep episodes of going missing to a minimum.

Allegations are well managed. Communication to external safeguarding agencies happens immediately and there is excellent collaborative working to ensure that children remain safe while any follow-up work takes place.

Restraints are proportionate and effective and are only used as a last resort. Records are detailed and children's views are consistently sought. However, the use of consequences is not regularly reviewed to ensure that they are effective.

Some records include words such as 'dysregulated' and 'heightened'. These terms are non-descriptive and do not help staff to understand the behaviour that is being demonstrated. Furthermore, the use of such terms does not help children who may want to read their records in the future.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is a committed, caring and determined manager. She has an exceptional knowledge of children and staff. Children regularly seek her out and she ensures that she always makes time for them. Staff are unanimous in their praise of the manager and how she leads the home.

When there have been concerns relating to staff practice, these have been immediately responded to with clear actions and target-setting. Good use of single-subject supervisions and, where appropriate, advice from human resources supports leaders and managers to make appropriate decisions.

Staff receive high levels of support. Monthly supervision is well documented and provides staff with good-quality support. This is further supplemented by weekly handover meetings that allow the opportunity to share relevant information and to ensure that staff are equipped to look after children effectively. There is a consistent flow of information between staff meetings and what happens in children's meetings. On one occasion, an identified learning issue that should have been addressed through supervision was not.

Staff have monthly development days. The registered manager identifies themes and goes through them with staff to ensure that they are as up to date as possible. This allows ongoing development of learning.

Leaders and managers fully understand the strengths and weaknesses of the home. Robust monitoring systems are supplemented with clear and aspirational target-setting. This includes input from children and staff and allows genuine development and improvement across the home. For example, children identified areas of the home that needed improvement and how they wanted it changed. Leaders were quick to respond to this, which helped children to feel heard and valued.

The registered manager has developed external relationships that are collaborative and open and welcomes criticism with a view to improving practice. This has ensured transparency and that all professionals work together.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff supervision is used effectively to address identified learning issues when required. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 43, paragraph 9.14)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Information about children must be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person should ensure that any sanctions used to address children's behaviour are monitored and reviewed to make sure they are fair, proportionate and effective. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.33)

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: 1246521

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Hillcrest Children's Services Ltd

Registered provider address: Acorn Norfolk Limited, Atria, Spa Road, Bolton BL1 4AG

Responsible individual: Jodie Parker

Registered manager: Abbie Troth

Inspectors

Mark Newington, Social Care Inspector
Paul Taylor, Social Care Inspector

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