

1246521

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home is run by a national private organisation. It can accommodate up to 14 children across two houses, one for boys and girls aged between 7 and 12 years, and the other for girls aged from 12 to 18 years.

The manager registered with Ofsted in September 2019.

Visit dates: 9 to 10 September 2020

Previous inspection date: 20 August 2019

Previous inspection judgement: requires improvement to be good

Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for
- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Findings from the visit

We identified no serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Children present as happy and confident. Staff form strong and caring relationships of trust. Staff have a strongly embedded therapeutic ethos that informs their day-to-day practice. They understand the impact of trauma on children. Staff deliver effective, individualised care and support to promote positive change for those in their care.

Staff practice during lockdown is exemplary. They work hard to create experiences and memories for children to minimise the negative impact of extended periods of isolation. These include a mini festival, baking competitions, dance parties and a strong focus on creative play. These events have all been gathered together in a 'Lockdown Adventures' journal, so children will be able to look back on this time and remember all the great times they had.

Staff have also been able to support children's continuing progress in education. Staff secured tutors and teaching assistants from their attached school to support effective home learning. They are currently supporting children to return to off-site education safely.

Children maintain contact with family, with the support of online technology when face-to-face contact is not possible.

Children speak about their home and the staff with great affection and positivity. They feel their views are valued and give lots of examples of activities and facilities that staff provide for them on request.

The home is full of beautiful hand-painted murals, and every child's bedroom contains personal touches to enhance their sense of belonging.

The safety of children

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of their role in safeguarding children. Risks are clearly identified and well managed.

Episodes of going missing from home are extremely rare. Some children do require restrictive practice to manage their behaviour. Every child has a plan to reduce this to a minimum, and staff debrief effectively with children after every incident to support learning and personal growth.

Staff are sensitive to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's psychological well-being. They reflect carefully on how this influences children's behaviour. Regular 'team around the child' meetings and support from the home's

attached clinical team help to develop effective support strategies to minimise the psychological impact of lockdown.

Staff have managed to maintain their skills and competency around safeguarding and behaviour management despite the challenges of limited face-to-face training. Staff have made good use of online resources and are rapidly re-engaging with training refreshers and face-to-face events now that this is possible.

Leaders and managers

The registered manager acknowledges that the team faced some significant challenges at the time of the last inspection. Staff morale was low and the atmosphere in both houses was unsettled. The registered manager has worked tirelessly to address these concerns. She now has a very functional and happy staff team. Children in both houses are making excellent progress.

The registered manager has an ambitious vision for her home which she makes clear in well-developed plans for the future. Staff coalesce around her leadership to drive forward progress. The whole team talks with pride about its achievements with children.

The registered manager maintains close scrutiny of all practice in the home. She completes reflective reports after any serious incidents. These reports identify key areas of learning for staff. The registered manager places importance on both internal and external monitoring and values the role they play in the continuous development of the home.

Professionals from partner agencies speak highly of the staff and the registered manager. They describe good levels of communication and strong childcare practice. They give examples of progress for children including improved emotional well-being, ability to regulate emotions and adherence to boundaries. Some also cited better relationships with adults and peers alongside safer relationships in the community.

Staff benefit from excellent levels of support from line managers and the clinical team. They also state that training is of a consistently high quality and gives them the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfil their roles.

The registered manager has guided the team expertly throughout lockdown to provide children with the security and safety they need to continue to thrive.

The requirements made at the last inspection have been met.

No requirements or recommendations are made following this visit.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 1246521

Registered provider: Hillcrest Children's Services Ltd

Registered provider address: Hillcrest Children's Services Ltd, Turnpike Gate House, Alcester Heath, Alcester, Warwickshire B49 5JG

Responsible individual: Jon Edgecombe

Registered manager: Abbie Troth

Inspectors

Peter Jackson, Social Care Inspector
Paul Thomas, Social Care Inspector

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