

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 operated by a private organisation. It provides care for up to 14 children across two houses. One house is for children aged between five and 12 years, and the other is for children aged between seven and 18 years. The home supports children who experience social and emotional difficulties and helps to prepare them for their future in line with their long-term plans.

At the time of the inspection, 14 children were living at the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in September 2019.

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 February 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 31 January 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
31/01/2024	Full	Outstanding
06/09/2022	Full	Good
22/06/2021	Full	Good
20/08/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Staff celebrate the uniqueness of every child. Their deep understanding of the children's individual needs allows them to adapt their support seamlessly and effectively. Staff's acceptance and understanding help the children to develop their sense of identity and self-worth. One child said, 'I'm really proud of myself, and I know they're proud of me too.'

Staff care greatly for the children. As a result, the children feel valued and loved. The children speak enthusiastically about the relationships that they have with staff. The value that the children place on these relationships is such that when selecting rewards, they often choose opportunities for one-to-one activities with staff above material possessions.

Children benefit from stable care. Most of the children have experienced multiple moves before living at the home. One child's social worker spoke of how staff's immense dedication has ensured a 'break in the cycle' for this child. For many children, the time they have lived in this home is the longest they have lived in any one place. This stability provides the time needed for the children to gain a sense of permanence and, through this, the foundation needed to sustain meaningful change.

All the children are making exceptional progress from their starting points. This is especially the case in respect of their social and emotional development. Family and professionals, along with the children themselves, identify how the children are better able to manage their emotions because of the support that they receive. Support from staff, alongside therapeutic input, helps to provide the children with an understanding of their feelings and equips them with healthier and safer coping strategies.

Children have made significant progress with their education. Most of the children are attending school on a full-time basis, with many having struggled to engage in learning before moving into the home. All children have education plans, which ensures that their individual needs are understood and fully supported.

Staff are dedicated in their pursuit of promoting positive experiences for the children. One social worker said that staff excel in the 'enrichment' they provide to the children. The children experience a range of activities and holidays. The staff are thoughtful and creative when organising celebrations to mark occasions such as Christmas and birthdays. These memories are captured in photo books and canvases displayed around the home.

A strength of the managers and staff is the approach to children moving into and out of the home. Three children have left since the last inspection. All three moves were planned and included either reunification with their family or a move to live closer to them. A creative and caring approach is taken to supporting moves for the children. The

home has celebrations and traditions when welcoming and saying goodbye to the children, which supports them to experience positive first impressions and endings.

Staff seek the children's views routinely about all aspects of their care, including their choices for meals, activities and rewards. The children also contribute their views towards staff appraisals and recruitment.

Staff take a proactive lead in ensuring that children maintain relationships with their families. This includes arranging and supporting family time even when there is a significant geographical distance. The children's families speak positively of the care that staff provide to the children and the vital role that they play in promoting family time.

The home is situated over two buildings, both of which are thoughtfully decorated. The children's bedrooms are individualised to reflect their different personalities and interests. Shared spaces include specially adapted furniture that supports the children coming together to play, watch television and eat their meals.

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

Risks to the children are comprehensively understood by staff. All children have detailed risk assessments and care plans, which are regularly reviewed and updated. Staff are confident in their understanding of safeguarding procedures and know the necessary steps required of them. Parents, professionals and family members are routinely updated and consulted regarding any safeguarding concerns.

Children feel safe and identify staff who they can seek support from if required. The children are confident that staff will respond and help to address any worries they have. The children do not go missing from home. This is because of the relationships that they have with staff and the fact that they feel happy and safe where they live.

Meticulous record-keeping helps to provide a clear picture of safeguarding incidents and the steps taken by staff. Managers consistently review all safeguarding records. Their oversight supports the management of, and response to, incidents, as well as ensuring the quality of record-keeping.

There is a proactive approach to the management of risks. The staff recognise the importance of responding appropriately to risks and anticipating and mitigating potential future risks for the children. This approach is supported through regular child-focused discussions and innovative assessments that consider any upcoming events, changes and behavioural patterns for children.

Allegations against staff are always taken seriously and are quickly and appropriately responded to. This includes consultations and referrals to safeguarding agencies. Investigations into allegations are carried out externally, which guarantees a level of impartiality.

Staff are skilled in using de-escalation techniques. Each child has a personalised plan that includes established strategies for support. Physical intervention is reserved as a last resort and only used when necessary. It is proportionate and safely managed. Supportive discussions are routinely held with the children following any form of restraint. Therapeutic support is provided to staff to ensure their continued understanding of the children's social and emotional needs. Managers consistently monitor any incidents of physical intervention to ensure that these are safely managed and to track any emerging patterns for children. Lessons learned are routinely shared in team meetings. Additional training is provided when needed, and research-informed development sessions are well utilised.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is a determined leader who sets high expectations for the standard of care that is to be provided to the children. The manager takes immense pride in her role and is invested and committed to doing the best she can to improve outcomes for the children. She is a positive and strong role model for the staff and leads by example.

The manager has a strong presence in the home. This supports her relationships with the children and her detailed understanding of their needs. As a result, the children can confidently approach the manager and share their concerns with her.

The manager uses a range of techniques to understand children's progress. These include working closely with partner professionals and having oversight of the children's records. The manager routinely seeks feedback from other agencies, families and the children to inform and support the development of the home.

The manager is a tenacious advocate for the children. She promptly escalates concerns to external agencies when support for the children is delayed or falls short of expectations.

The manager has a solid understanding of the home's strengths and weaknesses and celebrates the successes they have. She constantly strives to improve and is instrumental in driving positive change for the service.

The manager's positive attitude inspires the team and establishes a 'can-do' culture in the home. Staff speak glowingly of the support that they receive from the management team. One staff member said, 'I am valued here as a person... I'm so supported.'

Staff benefit from regular and reliable supervision provided by the manager and deputy managers. This supervision is of exceptional quality and provides a reflective environment where staff can openly discuss the welfare of the children and their own ongoing learning and development.

Although the manager is confident to seek support when required, formal supervision for the manager has fallen short of the good practice experienced by staff. Specifically, there

have been significant delays in the preparation and delivery of her supervision notes. This has not affected the children or their welfare.

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

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that senior managers follow good practice in relation to recording the content and/or outcomes of supervision sessions. The person providing the supervision and the member of staff should have a copy of the record. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.4)

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: Maybrook House, Third Floor, Queensway, Halesowen
B63 4AH

Responsible individual: Tamara Pearcey

Registered manager: Abbie Troth

Inspectors

Kerry Howarth, Social Care Inspector
Glen Strowbridge, Social Care Inspector

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