

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 national 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 between eight and 18 years old. The home supports children with social and emotional difficulties and helps to prepare them for their futures in line with their long-term plans. At the time of the inspection, 13 children were living at the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in September 2019.

Inspection dates: 31 January and 1 February 2024

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

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: 6 September 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
06/09/2022	Full	Good
22/06/2021	Full	Good
20/08/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good
02/01/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children thrive and flourish at this home. The care that they receive is individualised and nurturing, and enables them to experience transformative outcomes and make significant progress in all areas of their lives.

Most children who move in to the home, do so when they are young and after having experienced numerous moves and placement breakdowns. However, when they arrive at the home, children settle well and develop close and meaningful relationships with staff and each other. This enables children to feel secure, well cared for, and safe from the moment that they arrive. As a result, children benefit from stability and make exceptional progress from their starting points. This enhances their life chances and prepares them well for their next steps. One parent said that their child's 'chances and opportunities in life are transformed due to their experiences of the home'.

Children have their emotional, health and education needs met to a high standard. All children are in full-time education, are fully engaged, and make positive progress. This is in large part due to the registered manager prioritising children's educational needs and proactively advocating for them when other agencies need further challenge. Children's progress is particularly significant as many of them were not accessing education when they first moved in to the home. They are now catching up with their peers, and their long-term prospects have significantly improved.

The two houses are beautifully presented and welcoming. They provide a homely feel, and children's bedrooms are designed in accordance with their preferences, likes and interests. Children have access to a plethora of toys, games and activities, alongside on-site adventure playgrounds and a sensory room. Activities enjoyed by children include trips to London, days out to theme parks, visiting aquariums, visiting the beach, and enjoying summer holidays together. Children also engage in regular hobbies, such as dance, swimming and horse riding. These experiences are chosen by the children. They enable them to have fun and make positive childhood memories that they can look back on with fondness. These memories are captured in memory books and photos, which are displayed in abundance throughout the two houses.

Children move on from the home in positive ways. This includes some children moving back to their families or to long-term foster care, when previously this was not thought possible. One child had to move on from the home quickly. This was due to the home no longer being able to meet their changing needs. Despite this, the move was planned, and the manager and staff ensured that this was a positive experience for the child.

When children are unable to return home to the care of their family, inspirational work is carried out by the registered manager to ensure that alternative plans are considered. For instance, they advocate for children to move on to placements with their brother or sister. Consequently, children are given the opportunity to grow up with a family member when this was previously not thought to be an option.

Staff, leaders and managers go above and beyond to enhance and develop children's family relationships. This includes facilitating family time for children whose families live far from the home, reconnecting children with family members who may have lost contact, and introducing children to family members who they had no knowledge of. One child is also now able to spend time safely in the community with a friend from school. This was something that was never thought possible.

External professionals, in the main, have positive views of children's experiences in the home. However, a social worker questioned the level of therapy provided for one child. In this instance, the child did not have their need for direct therapy assessed in line with the organisation's own timescales. This has already been identified and addressed by the registered manager. Despite this, the child has made significant progress in terms of their education, self-esteem, and behaviour, and enjoys the activities and experiences at the home. All children who have an assessed need for therapy, are accessing this in accordance with their plans.

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

There is a strong and robust safeguarding culture in the home. Children benefit from clear and consistent routines and boundaries. Unkind behaviour towards peers is identified and addressed effectively. This happens in a child-centred, therapeutic way so that children understand how others may feel. Staff explore why a child may be behaving in a certain way, rather than focusing on the behaviour being presented. A clear, child-focused bullying protocol ensures that any incidents of bullying are identified, and children understand how staff will respond. As a result, incidents have reduced.

Children's risks and specific needs are fully known by staff, who understand their roles and responsibilities regarding effective safeguarding. Children say that they feel loved and safe.

The registered manager's oversight of incidents is exceptionally thorough. Records are meticulous and capture the full details of an incident, a chronology of all actions taken, and the outcomes. Records are child centred. The manager's focus is consistently on what can be learned from each incident. This includes investigations relating to allegations against staff that are unfounded. This level of professional curiosity is modelled to staff and contributes to the proactive safeguarding culture of the home.

Staff use physical interventions as a last resort. All staff are trained in the restraint model used and there are trainers on site to monitor and refresh practice if needed.

The approach used by staff is trauma informed. Staff are clear about children's individual needs and focus on helping children to learn, rather than how to manage situations and behaviours. Consequently, there has been a significant reduction in physical interventions.

There is a clear and detailed protocol for staff to follow should a child go missing from the home. However, there have been no incidents of this nature since the previous inspection.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

A consistent and effective registered manager continues to lead the team. The registered manager is dedicated and inspirational. She has high expectations of what children can, and do, achieve. She has the same expectations for the staff team. The registered manager is an amazing advocate for children and will readily challenge other professionals if this is in the best interests of children.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the support that they receive from the registered manager. They benefit from regular and meaningful supervision sessions that focus on their well-being and professional development. Safeguarding features highly in team meetings and is the core of staff practice and supervision. When learning from incidents is identified, managers ensure that the learning is effectively shared.

The registered manager has effective and robust monitoring systems that ensure excellent oversight of the home. She fully understands the strengths of the home and areas that she wishes to develop further.

All mandatory training is up to date. Training for staff is based on children's needs. This is not only considered when children first move in to the home, but whenever there are changes in children's behaviour, following safeguarding incidents, and when feedback is received. The registered manager tracks and monitors children's progress and considers any themes from incidents. She welcomes feedback from parents, external professionals, staff, and other leaders.

The therapeutic model of care underpins everyday interactions and practice. When a child was in crisis recently, staff sustained some significant injuries. Refresher training in the therapeutic model and how to manage behaviour positively was delivered. This helped staff to re-familiarise themselves with the child's past experiences and enabled positive restorative work to be carried out. This helped staff to fully support the child through a very difficult time and maintain their positive relationships with them.

Children's differences are celebrated, and equality and diversity are promoted positively and consistently. For example, there is an annual cultural calendar that is created by children and staff. This includes specific global and national events for each month, factual information about different countries, cultures, celebrations and

religions, and different types of food. Children also participated in a local Pride event and explored Black History Month.

There has been some staff turnover since the last inspection. This could have compromised children's experiences. However, a core staff team remained in post and prevented this, ensuring consistency for children. One social worker said that 'children have had consistency of familiar staff' during this period. There are now minimal staff vacancies.

The responsible individual is visible and actively supports the registered manager through supervision and visiting the home regularly. Leaders and managers have created a culture of learning and reflection.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that required assessments to determine the level of therapeutic input children need are consistently carried out in line with the organisation's own timescales. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 34, paragraph 7.10)

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: Atria, Spa Road, Bolton BL1 4AG

Responsible individual: Jodie Parker

Registered manager: Abbie Troth

Inspectors

Kelly Marchmont, Regulatory Inspection Manager (lead)
Lee Kirwin, Regulatory Inspection Manager

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