

1259508

Registered provider: Hillcrest Children's Services Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is privately owned and provides care for up to 8 children who experience social and emotional difficulties. At the time of the inspection, 7 children were living at the home.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since September 2023.

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 January 2026

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: 18 December 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/12/2024	Full	Outstanding
06/02/2024	Full	Outstanding
21/06/2022	Full	Good
08/03/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children thrive and make excellent progress from their starting points. Relationships between children and staff are exceptionally strong. Children experience caring interactions and positive role modelling from staff who demonstrate emotional commitment and professional skills to help them to flourish.

The home is maintained to a high standard and reflects a nurturing family environment. For example, the soft furnishings, artwork and individually themed bedrooms are chosen by the children. Children are encouraged and take pride in contributing to keeping the home clean and tidy.

Staff understand the importance education for children. They demonstrate admirable dedication and creativity to ensure that children access learning when they are not in full time education. The opportunities provided for children enrich their lives, and children are exceptionally proud of their achievements.

Staff understand the home's statement of purpose. They maintain positive relationships with other professionals and work diligently with the therapy team. Professionals say that communication with them is excellent, enabling a joined-up approach to achieving the best outcomes for children.

Staff prioritise children's health and wellbeing. All health appointments are attended, and medical advice is sought in a timely way when needed. Children have an extremely varied diet and are encouraged to make healthy choices.

Children experience a broad range of activities inside and outside of the home environment. Staff make good use their own talents and knowledge to encourage children to learn new skills. The result is that some children have overcome situations that they previously found challenging and some have learned how to play musical instruments.

Children have many opportunities to share their views and are regularly consulted about the quality of care that they receive. Children enjoy weekly house meetings. In addition, staff actively encourage children to attend all meetings about their care planning. This has improved their confidence and self-esteem.

Advocacy for children is a significant strength. The tenacious attitude and unwavering support of staff mean that they have the information to inform the care they provide, and children feel listened to and heard.

When children move into the home, careful consideration is given to their compatibility with the children already living in the home. Planned, thoughtful introductions support children to build friendships and develop mutual acceptance of one another.

Older children are supported through comprehensive, age-appropriate planning that enables successful transitions to independence.

Staff support children to spend time with family members and other people who are important to them. Children are helped to understand their background in a sensitive and resourceful way because staff unquestionably acknowledge the importance of children understanding their lived and care experiences.

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

The excellent safeguarding culture is evident throughout the home. The registered manager and staff promote an open learning principle, incorporating a visible thread of safeguarding across all areas of practice.

Children said they feel safe living in this home and have a trusted adult who they would speak to if they were worried about anything. When children raise concerns, staff prioritise their wellbeing to ensure that they continue to be secure and reassured.

Staff confidently manage children's behaviour in line with written plans. Continued positive engagement and nurturing relationships mean that staff understand and recognise when children are struggling and respond accordingly. As a result, incidents of aggression have reduced, and children better understand how to manage their emotions.

Staff have consistent working patterns, and this provides stability and predictable routines for children. Comprehensive and purposeful handovers ensure staff starting their shift are fully informed about children's current needs.

Staff proactively assess and review children's risks and put measures in place to address these. However, risk assessments do not always reflect when risks have reduced or resolved. As a result, children could be disproportionately supervised or restricted.

Children benefit from regular planned and ad hoc key work sessions. These are comprehensively recorded. However, the use of clinical language undermines the caring responses of staff and would be unhelpful to the child should they read their records now or in the future.

Health and safety matters are effectively monitored and recorded in line with the home's policies. This means that children live in a home that is as safe as possible. Children actively take part in regular fire drills. Therefore, they know how to keep themselves safe in an emergency.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is led by a dedicated, inspirational and respected registered manager who influentially leads by example. The committed deputy manager and nurturing proactive team share the vision of the home and have high aspirations for children.

Staff morale is high because of the culture of openness, support and respect towards one another. Staff said they are well supported and enjoy working in a highly efficient and well-managed environment.

All staff receive regular, practice-focused supervision, and their performance and suitability for the role are formally appraised at least once a year. Staff development strengthens the organisation and provides greater stability for children.

Staff have access to suitable training and resources. All staff hold necessary and appropriate qualifications. The registered manager and staff recognise that developing the staff team's skills is essential to meeting the children's needs.

Monitoring systems are effective and provide the registered manager with clear oversight of the home's operations. This enables the leadership team to identify themes and trends that inform practice development and support children's progress. These findings are shared with the team to promote stability and consistent practice.

The registered manager's own quality of care review enables senior leaders to have a clear understanding of the home's strengths and areas for development. Regular, well-informed meetings and strong quality assurance processes enable a clear focus to inform the home's development plan.

The independent person visits the home once a month, providing an additional layer of scrutiny. However, the reports often focus on the home's internal policies and procedures. As a result, the reports do not always reflect an impartial assessment of the home's arrangements or evaluate regulatory shortfalls. Nonetheless, the reports offer a valued insight into the home's functions and whether children are safeguarded effectively.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always 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 individual appointed to carry out visits to the home as an independent person makes a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home's care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 65, paragraph 15.5)
- The registered person should ensure that staff continually and actively assess children's risks and the arrangements in place to protect them and others. When these risks are assessed as having reduced, relevant plans and safeguards should also be reviewed to ensure that children are not disproportionately restricted or excessively supervised. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)

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: 1259508

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Hillcrest Children's Services Ltd

Registered provider address: Keys Group, Maybrook House, Third Floor,
Queensway, Halesowen B63 4AH

Responsible individual: Andrew Spice

Registered manager: Sian Kelly

Inspector

Jill Sephton-Wright, Social Care Inspector

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