

2795987

Registered provider: The Hills Children's Homes Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is owned and run by a private organisation. The home is registered to care for up to four children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

The home is currently being led by a manager who is not yet registered. There were two children living in the home at the time of the inspection. Both children were spoken to by the inspector.

The inspector was aware during this inspection of a current and ongoing investigation being led by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the incident were considered (where appropriate) alongside other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform the inspector's judgements.

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 April 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 11 December 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/12/2024	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

The overall judgement has been affected by the decline of effectiveness in help and protect and leadership and management. Despite the identified shortfalls, children continue to make progress at the home.

Since the last inspection, no children have moved in or out of the home. During the inspection, two children were living at the home.

Both children are making good progress with education. Both children were not in education before moving to the home. One child is in full-time education and the other child has engaged with home tuition and is due to start their new school soon.

One child has made significant progress with speech and language. The child no longer needs a speech and language therapist.

Staff have positive relationships with children. Children enjoy spending time with staff. Staff are attentive and caring towards the children. The staff keep personalised positivity books for the children. The kind and affirming content is regularly shared with the children.

Time with family is promoted in the home and in the community. The children spend time with people who are important to them.

Children participate in a range of activities. Activities in the community have increased. These have included imaginative play, day trips, swimming and attending football matches. Children's confidence and self-esteem are improving.

The home is large, spacious and well decorated. Children can enjoy several communal rooms, including a gaming room that they enjoy. The children have made personal touches to their bedrooms. The garden is large and well kept.

Children's care plans do not include information and targets that are included in the local authority care plans. Care plans are basic and do not capture the children's individual needs, aspirations or goals. The plans do not help staff understand all of the children's care needs.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Since the last inspection, there has been a decline in the effectiveness of safeguarding, despite staff having appropriate safeguarding training.

There have been two allegations. On both occasions, staff have not followed safeguarding procedures. The previous manager was not informed for two days of an allegation. Once aware, she took appropriate action to safeguard the child and completed an internal investigation. Staff practice was addressed in a team meeting. However, the manager did not ensure that staff had an additional supervision that she had identified as an action. Not following up the practice concerns could mean that staff repeat the practice, and learning opportunities are missed.

One allegation was highlighted by the inspector during the inspection. The allegation was notified by staff to the manager via electronic systems, with a two-day delay. The manager had not received this, leading to a delay of a further eight days. The manager took appropriate action during the inspection to inform relevant professionals.

Some staff are not consistent with behaviour management of children. Staff do not all understand and implement behaviour support strategies. Children's views on how they want to be supported are not included in the plans.

There have been some incidents when children have been held. Two incidents have not been reviewed by a manager for effectiveness or proportionality. The child has not been spoken to. Debriefs are not always completed with staff. Debriefs that have been completed are not reflective and there are no actions of learning from the debriefs identified.

There have been no incidents of children being missing from the home. Children have appropriate levels of supervision. The children have agreed protocols and risk management plans. Staff would understand how to respond to a missing from home incident.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

There has been a decline in overall effectiveness of leadership and management. Since the last inspection, the previous manager chose not to register with Ofsted. A new manager has been appointed and has submitted an application to register with Ofsted. Two responsible individuals have left the home, and a new responsible individual has been appointed. Staff retention is poor. The quality of oversight and monitoring of the home has declined. Frequent changes in management and staff does not provide consistency for children.

The new manager has not received appropriate supervision or guidance since she started her role. The responsible individual has an appropriate plan to ensure that the

manager is supported moving forward. The manager and responsible individual have a plan to address the shortfalls that were already identified and that were identified during the inspection.

Generally, training is good quality. Staff either hold or are working towards a level 3 diploma, within agreed timescales. However, only a small number of staff have had the specific therapeutic training that is outlined in the home's statement of purpose.

A social worker said that the children are making good progress, but is unhappy with the frequent changes in staff and management. Constant changes do not provide consistency for the children.

Recording systems are confusing and disorganised. Some documents are online and some on paper. During the inspection, staff and managers struggled to locate documents easily. This disorganisation makes it harder for the manager to have effective monitoring and oversight.

The staff said that the manager is supportive, listens to them and is approachable. Staff attend regular team meetings and are receiving regular and good-quality supervisions.

Managers have worked hard to recruit staff. At the time of inspection, there has been no use of agency staff for three months.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(v)) In particular, ensure that staff understand and follow the home's safeguarding policy and that any practice concerns identified are managed effectively.	10 June 2025
The registered person must prepare and implement a policy ("the behaviour management policy") which sets out the measures of control, discipline and restraint which may be used in relation to children in the home. The registered person must ensure that within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so ("the authorised person")— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and	10 June 2025

within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure. (Regulation 35 (1)(b) (3)(a)(b)(vii)(i)(ii)(c)) In particular, ensure that staff follow the home's policy on de-escalating behaviour and that the manager evaluates the effectiveness of each intervention. In particular, ensure that staff receive an effective debrief to identify any learning from the incidents and that the child's views are captured.	
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(f)(h)) In particular, the manager must provide stable and consistent management in the home and seek to understand and improve staff retention. In particular, the manager must ensure that children's care plans are in line with the local authority care plan, are individualised and include all relevant information.	10 June 2025

In particular, the manager must ensure there are organised and effective recording systems, to help improve monitoring and oversight of the home.	
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(c)) In particular, this relates to staff receiving the training required as set out in the home's statement of purpose to meet children's needs. This requirement is restated.	10 June 2025

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: 2795987

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: The Hills Children's Homes Limited

Registered provider address: Coronation Court, Northampton NN4 8SZ

Responsible individual: Post vacant

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Amy Miles, Social Care Inspector

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