

SC011972

Registered provider: Hillcrest Children's Services Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately operated home provides care for up to six children. Currently, five boys are accommodated. The home specialises in caring for children who have experienced trauma in their lives and may exhibit emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since 2012.

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 January 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 13 October 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/10/2021	Full	Good
19/11/2019	Full	Good
08/08/2018	Full	Outstanding
10/01/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are happy at the home. Staff are attentive to children and nurture and care for them. Children get along with one another and have developed close friendships and common interests. Currently, children are passionate about fictional cartoon characters, and this has helped shape the design of children's bedrooms, activities on offer and games to occupy children's spare time. This has created a warm, welcome feeling in the home where children feel respected.

Children spend time with those who matter most to them. Staff have supported children to maintain contact with families and professionals. One example involves the commitment staff have shown to support one child to have regular online meetups with a parent who lives overseas. The child had not seen the parent for some time; however, staff persisted in obtaining the parent's details and committed to regular online meetups. This has allowed the child to develop a new relationship with their parent and feel valued.

Staff sensitively support children to better understand who they are and who they want to be. Children celebrate their culture and heritage, celebrating important days linked to their nationality or religion. Children have access to food, clothing and haircuts linked to their cultures. Children who wish to explore their identity can do so safely and in a manner which makes them feel comfortable. This is a home where everyone is welcome.

Children have lived at the home for some time. In the last year, one child has left to live with a family member, and another child is in the process of moving back to live with family. Staff ensure that the child can see their family member more frequently as they prepare for their move. Memory books are in place with pictures and captions to capture fond memories of the child's time at the home. These keepsakes are given to children as they leave to remember their time at the home.

Social workers are positive about the care children receive. One social worker was positive about the communication with staff. They said, 'Despite being far away from the home, I have regular calls and often feel like one of the team.' Another social worker spoke positively of how staff champion a child's wishes, and another spoke of how staff 'empower' children in decisions about their care.

All children have a school placement and have full attendance. Staff prepare children for educational milestones such as transitions to secondary school, examinations and college placements, and celebrate children's achievements. One child has recently started walking independently to school as staff finalise plans for the child's transition to a local secondary school. This helps children feel independent and that they are growing up.

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

Children do not go missing from the home. Close relationships with staff, each other and their families mean that children want to be around the home and engaged in fun activities and their care plans. Staff tailor activities to the individual needs of children whether this be long walks, trips to local ski centres or 'chasing rare fictional cartoon characters' in the nearby communities.

Children do become unsettled on occasions and physical intervention has been used to support them. Staff use this as a last resort and know children's plans. Staff are skilled at recognising children's triggers, and plans support staff with strategies to help children calm. When children are held, they are supported during and after the incident.

The manager oversees records, and any learning is implemented. However, on one occasion when a child was unhappy after a hold, the manager failed to address the child's wishes in the record, which was a missed opportunity to better understand what the child was communicating, and act accordingly.

Within the staff team is a maintenance person who ensures that the home is well maintained and known risks are reduced. The children share a warm relationship with this person; they know the children well, and they speak fondly of each child. At short notice, any repair jobs are completed, as staff want children to have the best experience.

Children feel listened to. On the rare occasion when children have made a complaint about staff or an issue with another child, staff have responded quickly and effectively. Children's views are taken seriously, relevant professionals are informed, and outcomes reached are fair. Children are consulted through any investigation process and feel involved. As a result, children feel they are a part of the running of the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager has a deep understanding of their children and is present in the home. The manager speaks fondly of the children, staff and the team of professionals and families involved. Children can speak to the manager at any time and feel able to talk about matters ranging from new Pokémon cards to decisions about their care.

Staff feel supported and equipped to perform their roles. This includes staff inductions and ongoing training and supervision. Appropriately vetted staff feel that they have the tools needed to support their children. Safeguarding scenarios in supervisions help staff avoid complacency and remain prepared for unforeseen risks that children may face. The manager ensures that any gaps in staff knowledge or skills are addressed with additional training, and staff feel able to contact their manager if issues arise.

The manager has ensured that staff are child centred and create a home where children feel listened to. The manager has a good admissions process and ensures that any child joining the home is well matched, sharing similar interests to the children already living in the home.

The manager ensures that children's plans are regularly updated and help inform social workers when reviewing progress. Social workers praised the effective communication from staff and the manager, which has helped to create consistency in the care that children receive.

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, 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.

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff have the skills and confidence to communicate easily and understand the importance of listening to, involving, and responding to the children they care for. This is particularly when children share their views about their care, and that staff take action to respond to the child's views. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 22, paragraph 4.10)

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: SC011972

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Hillcrest Children's Services Ltd

Registered provider address: Atria, Spa Road, Bolton, Greater Manchester BL1 4AG

Responsible individual: Sadie Dangerfield

Registered manager: Rachel Burgess

Inspector

Matt Nicholls, Social Care Inspector

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