

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 home is registered to provide care for up to six children with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. It is owned and run by a private organisation. At the time of the inspection, there were five children living in the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in January 2012.

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 February 2025

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: 5 October 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/10/2023	Full	Good
03/01/2023	Full	Good
13/10/2021	Full	Good
19/11/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are happy and settled. They have strong relationships with staff and value the time they spend together. They make progress in other areas of their lives because of the stable foundation they have built.

Children are encouraged to join sports teams and social clubs and to pursue their passions. Staff help them to learn important life skills, such as cooking, travelling and looking after their own personal hygiene. They spend time away from the home with friends. The children are becoming more independent as a result.

Staff work collaboratively with other professionals to help the children to better understand their identities. For example, one child has recently completed therapeutic life-story work. Staff help and encourage the children to maintain contact with their families and friends. The children's cultural needs are well understood by staff, who help them to learn more about their diversity.

Positive behaviour is consistently promoted. Staff reward the children's achievements and gestures of kindness frequently, while the use of consequences is focused on restoration and helping the children to learn from their actions. As a result, the relationships between the children are kind and caring. The children share their belongings and show interest in each other's lives.

Children's education is prioritised. All the children are in full-time education and staff have excellent relationships with the schools. Staff help the children with homework, listen to them read and praise them for achievements at school. Staff recognise the importance of relationships and continuity in education. One child has continued to attend their school after they moved to the home, despite the additional distance, because of the significant progress the child is making educationally.

The home is warmly decorated and furnished to a high standard. The children's bedrooms are highly personalised. However, the use of door sensors, which alert staff to the children's movements overnight, is not individually assessed and has not been regularly reviewed. This practice undermines the children's right to privacy.

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

Staff understand the vulnerabilities and risks of the children well. Plans which inform the response from staff are detailed and updated regularly. Staff discuss risks with the children so that they understand the impact of their actions, and the children are involved in identifying strategies that help them to manage their own behaviour. For example, one child has chosen toys to play with in the car. This has been effective in reducing risks during travel.

Staff know how to raise safeguarding concerns. When staff have concerns about the children's welfare, they respond appropriately and share their concerns with the wider safeguarding network to ensure that the children are safe. Records of actions taken are clear and demonstrate how managers work with others to safeguard the children.

When the children are distressed, staff are skilled in helping them to become safer and find more positive strategies to express themselves. They respond with care and nurture. Physical interventions are used infrequently. When they are used, they are proportionate and for the least amount of time needed to keep everybody safe. Managers review the records of restraint appropriately in order to identify any learning.

Children are helped to be healthier. When the children present with medical needs, staff work with healthcare professionals, such as the doctors, dieticians and mental health specialists, to get them the help they need. Staff teach the children about factors that affect their well-being and work creatively to overcome barriers to good health.

Children know how to complain. These are responded to effectively by managers, and changes are made to practice because of the children's views. Managers speak with the children to ensure they are happy with the response they have received. This helps the children to understand that their voices are important.

Staff manage health and safety effectively. Any maintenance requirements are quickly resolved, and the manager ensures that the home is maintained to a high standard. As a result, the children live in a safe home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is experienced, appropriately qualified and passionate about delivering high-quality care for the children. Staff speak positively about the support that they receive from the manager. One member of staff said, 'She will go out of her way to help you.'

Newly recruited staff receive a good quality induction. This helps to prepare staff with the skills they need to meet the needs of the children. Staff benefit from regular supervision and practice appraisals, which provides opportunities for managers to ensure that staff know how to care for the children in line with their plans. This means that the children receive consistent care.

The manager uses a range of monitoring systems to ensure they have a strong oversight of the operations of the home. The manager has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home, and there are plans in place to continue to improve the quality of care for the children.

Children's placements are kept under constant review. Managers work in collaboration with placing authorities to determine when the home is no longer meeting the needs of the children. They take effective action to support the children to move on in a planned

and positive way. When the children move on, they stay in contact with the staff, which reflects the strong relationships they have built.

Managers have good working relationships with partner agencies. They work in a child-focused way with the children's social workers to ensure that the children's needs are understood and met. Professionals say the children are supported by staff who know the children well and that communication is excellent.

Leaders and managers have not yet taken effective action to ensure that all relevant checks on new staff are fully carried out and well documented. One shortfall identified demonstrated that the reasons for one member of staff leaving a place of employment with children had not been fully explored.

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 registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a) (3)(d)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that if a person has previously worked in a position involving work with children or vulnerable adults, they must seek verification so far as reasonably practicable of the reason why the employment or position ended.	28 March 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that any monitoring of children, including the use of door alarms, must only be made where this is intended to safeguard the child's welfare. All decisions should be informed by a rigorous assessment of that individual child's needs, be properly recorded and be kept under regular review. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.16)

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

Responsible individual: Andrew Spice

Registered manager: Rachel Burgess

Inspector

Glen Strowbridge, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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