

SC011972

Registered provider: Hillcrest Children's Services Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide care for up to 6 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 4 children living at the home. The inspector spoke with 3 of the children.

The manager registered with Ofsted in January 2012.

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 February 2026

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 25 February 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/02/2025	Full	Good
05/10/2023	Full	Good
03/01/2023	Full	Good
13/10/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children were seen to have positive relationships with staff; however, they report mixed experiences of living at the home. One child described having good relationships with staff, although they were not clear about some boundaries. One child did not speak to the inspector due to feeling unwell. However, their family member reported that the child is happy, settled and has developed positive relationships with staff.

Children make good progress from their individual starting points. Some children are developing a better understanding of their emotions and are developing their confidence. All children are making progress in their engagement with education and their willingness to participate in new activities. One child who has previously been out of education for an extended period is now engaging with mainstream education. Another child is attending school full time and receives additional tutoring outside of school hours to further support their learning.

Children benefit from a range of enriching activities that help build confidence and self-esteem. These include football, gymnastics and martial arts. Staff have been creative with finding ways to support children to develop confidence and engage with activities that are in line with their interests. For example, one child was supported to attend individual boxing lessons before being encouraged to join a group boxing class, which they now attend regularly. During school holidays, staff make efforts to provide children with opportunities to participate in a variety of activities.

While children are offered opportunities to spend time with staff and engage in activities, there are occasions when some children spend long periods in their bedrooms after school. Staff recognise that further encouragement could be provided to support these children to spend more time with staff and strengthen relationships in the home.

Two children shared some concerns regarding changes in staffing arrangements. The children commented that staff changes can make it difficult to build close relationships. Leaders and managers recognise the impact that the turnover of staff has had over the past year, and efforts have been aimed at recruiting a full staff team, which has now been achieved.

One child moved into and out of the home in a short period of time as a result of staff being unable to safely manage incidents. Once it became apparent that the staff team was unable to meet the needs of the child, the decision was made quickly that an alternative home was needed. The manager has reflected on this and recognises that they did not make all possible efforts to speak to relevant professionals to ensure that the home could fully meet the child's needs. It is expected that this learning will be embedded into future practice.

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

When children go missing from home, staff do not always apply the procedures that are in place to safeguard children. At times, staff actions have inflamed incidents; on one occasion, this resulted in a child leaving the home. Staff hold nurturing conversations with children following incidents, and managers provide oversight of these events. However, greater reflection is needed on the impact of staff actions in the lead up to incidents. In addition, return home conversations with children are not consistently taking place when children return from being missing from home, which limits opportunities to understand the reasons for children leaving and to identify potential safeguarding risks.

Staff sometimes use physical intervention to manage children's behaviour. While these interventions are recorded and reviewed by managers, there are occasions when staff lack the skills to de-escalate situations effectively before they escalate. One child reported that these incidents occur frequently and that they make him feel sad. Management oversight identifies some concerns in staff practice. However, more could be done to ensure that learning from incidents is promoted and that staff practice continues to improve.

Consequences are used to promote children's positive behaviour in the home that are not always restorative. One child has lost a personal item as a result of an incident, while Key-work sessions have been undertaken with the child to help them learn about online safety and the impact of their behaviour, there is no clear plan for when the item will be returned.

The home's statement of purpose outlines that therapeutic care is provided to the children. However, it is not evident that staff are drawing on therapeutic approaches when managing incidents. Leaders and managers have recognised this shortfall and are implementing additional training to support staff with their development.

When concerns are raised about staff practice, immediate safeguards are put in place and investigations are undertaken appropriately, with information being shared with external safeguarding agencies appropriately. On one occasion, more could have been done to ensure that concerns were followed up with an external agency to ensure that they had been acted on. Overall, the response from leaders and managers has been clear and decisive, at times resulting in staff dismissal where this was appropriate.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager provides good oversight of practice in the home. Leaders and managers recognise the strengths and weaknesses of the home and have implemented plans to support the continued improvement of the home.

Since the last inspection, the home has experienced a period of instability with several new members of staff joining the team over the previous 6 months. This has had some impact on children. Leaders and managers recognise the impact that instability can have on children's experiences. There is now a full staff team in place, and leaders are focused on developing staff skills and strengthening consistency in the team before considering further children moving into the home.

Staff say that they are supported well. They speak positively of the manager and feel that they can raise concerns as needed. External professionals say that they have good communication with the staff team and that the manager advocates well for the children in the home.

Team meetings and supervision sessions take place regularly and include good reflection on how children are feeling and how staff work with them. When concerns emerge about staff practice, these are addressed thoroughly during supervision, and staff are also encouraged to reflect on how their relationships with children can improve.

Family members feel that they have good communication with staff from the home and that children have good relationships with some of the staff. They feel that children are making good progress, with one family member commenting that this is the most settled their child has ever been.

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 for 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— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(iii)(v)(vi)(b)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that staff are knowledgeable about the home protocols to keep children safe and act in accordance with these. In addition, staff should be skilled in de-escalation techniques and able to implement these in response to significant incidents.	27 March 2026
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children;	27 March 2026

use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff— understand and apply the home's statement of purpose; provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(b)(i)(iv)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that staff are knowledgeable about the therapeutic approaches that they are to use, as set out in the home's statement of purpose, and that these are routinely used to support children when they are distressed.	
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; encourage each child to take responsibility for the child's behaviour, in accordance with the child's age and understanding; help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(a)(ii)(iii)(iv))	27 March 2026

In particular the registered person must ensure that staff help children to learn healthy behaviours through positive means. Where personal items are removed from children as a consequence, there must be clear planning with regards to how and when items will be returned, and this must be clearly communicated to the child.	
The leadership and management 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— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(e)(h)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that the workforce provides stability to the children in the home and that staff have the skills and experience necessary to respond to the safeguarding concerns in the home. In addition, the registered person must ensure that following significant incidents, there is robust, critical analysis of staff practice to ensure that learning is identified and can be embedded into practice.	27 March 2026

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that children are engaged in positive routines and activities, throughout the week. This includes children being engaged in activities in and outside of the home when they return home from school to ensure that they are not spending long periods in their bedrooms. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 31, paragraph 6.5)

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: SC011972

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Hillcrest Children's Services Limited

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

Responsible individual: Andrew Spice

Registered manager: Rachel Burgess

Inspector

Minnette Sims, Social Care Inspector

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