

SC398377

Registered provider: Hillcrest Childrens Services (2) Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A large, private company owns this children's home. It is registered to provide care for up to four children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

There is a permanent registered manager who has been in post since December 2023 and is suitably qualified.

Three children live at the home. All were spoken to by the inspector.

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 July 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: 30 April 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
30/04/2024	Full	Good
09/05/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
25/01/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
04/08/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Despite only living at the home for a short time, the children have made progress across various aspects of their lives. Since the last inspection, two children have moved out. For one child, this was due to staff being unable to adequately meet their needs at the time.

Staff work hard to try to ensure that children moving into or out of the home have a positive experience, even in difficult circumstances. For example, when two children moved in at very short notice, staff quickly obtained provisions that the children might need and like to help them settle in. Consideration was also given to the needs of a child already living at the home, who helped staff to welcome the new children. These positive experiences have helped the children to settle in quickly.

Children are encouraged to engage in education. All children attend education full time and have good attendance. Staff have supported children to maintain the educational placements that were in place prior to them moving into the home. This has helped to minimise disruption to their education and lay the foundations for their future.

Staff support children to adopt good routines. For example, one child has gone from struggling to settle at night to settling on their own. This was established through working with the child to identify what could be put in place to help them. The child has clear visual aids to help them with their daily routines, which are appropriate to their age and understanding. This has had a positive impact on their participation in education and activities, and their relationships with staff.

There have been significant improvements to the home environment over the last few months. The home is warm and inviting. Children's bedrooms are personalised and reflect their individuality. Children's requests about the conditions of the home are acted on. At mealtimes, children and staff sit together and enjoy conversations. This helps children to enjoy, and feel proud of, their home.

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

Children feel safe living at the home. Staff are consistent in implementing clear routines and boundaries that help children to understand what is expected of them. For example, agreements about the amount of time that children spend online are consistently adhered to and enable children to participate in other activities and build strong relationships with staff. This has helped children to feel safe and settled and has contributed to improved behaviour.

Children are cared for by staff who have a good understanding of their needs. Consequently, incidents are few in number. When incidents do occur, staff take time to understand the reasons behind the child's behaviour and use professional curiosity. This

enables staff to better support children and identify strategies they can use when a child is distressed.

Staff help children to make positive choices through incentives, rewards and sanctions. Children are set clear and achievable goals in exchange for personalised rewards. This has been effective in helping to establish good routines and behaviours.

Allegations raised by children are taken seriously and appropriate action is taken to ensure that children are effectively safeguarded. Children are notified of the outcome and, where appropriate, supported in any reconciliation with adults to help them both move on. This helps to give children confidence that their concerns will be acted on.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

At the assurance inspection in December 2024, staffing issues and challenges in keeping one child safe had contributed to an exhausted staff team. Leaders decided that no further children would come to live at the home at that time and the child needed to move from the home due to a lack of suitably trained staff to meet their needs. Despite the challenges, staff continued to support the child until they moved to a home that could better meet their needs. New staff were recruited and trained, and work was undertaken to build the team.

Leaders and managers have worked hard to deliver the changes needed to ensure that children receive high-quality care. The manager has high expectations of the staff team, who speak affectionately about the children. When incidents occur or consequences are imposed, the manager identifies any learning and shares this with staff to help them reflect and learn. Feedback from children, colleagues and observation is also obtained to help the registered manager maintain good oversight of the care provided and take action to help staff improve practice.

Staff say that they feel well supported and enjoy coming to work. Staff receive regular supervision, which focuses heavily on staff development. The registered manager tests staff knowledge of safeguarding through scenario-based questions. They also obtain feedback from children and colleagues and observe staff practice. This helps the manager to identify and act on any shortfalls in practice and provides assurance as to the quality of care provided.

Children's views and wishes are heard. Staff are creative in the way in which they obtain feedback and involve children in the running of the home. Children's meetings have been adapted to better meet the age of the children. Children are asked to score how they are feeling, how school is and how well they have got on with staff. Any changes in scores are used to help explore any issues or concerns arising, so that action can be taken to support the children.

Feedback from external professionals is unanimous in their praise of the leadership of the home and quality of care provided. Professionals are positive about how children are helped to move into the home and how quickly they settle.

For the most part, the registered manager has good oversight of the home. While there is no evidence that this is having any adverse impact on the children, there are some shortfalls in relation to the management of ligature risks and oversight of staff training.

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

Recommendations

- The registered manager should ensure that staff access all appropriate resources to support their training needs and should understand the key role they play in the training and development of staff in the home. This specifically relates to the registered manager having full oversight of staff training records and ensuring that required training is completed by staff in a timely way. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)
- The registered manager should ensure that staff continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. This specifically relates to the potential ligature risks within the home. ('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: SC398377

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Hillcrest Childrens Services (2) Limited

Registered provider address: Maybrook House, Third Floor, Queensway, Halesowen, West Midlands B63 4AH

Responsible individual: Rachael Strange

Registered manager: Laura Mayle

Inspector

Louise Naylor, Social Care Inspector

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