

SC482299

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 owned and operated by a private organisation.

The home provides care for up to ten children who may experience social and emotional difficulties who are typically aged between 5-14 years old.

At the time of the inspection, six children were living at the home.

The manager registered with Ofsted in September 2018.

The registered provider has recently appointed a new responsible individual, and Ofsted are currently checking this person has the relevant capacity, experience and skills to carry out the role.

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 March 2026

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection and care.

Date of last inspection: 17 December 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/12/2024	Full	Outstanding
21/08/2023	Full	Good
28/02/2023	Full	Good
07/07/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children make excellent progress because of the high-quality nurture and care provided by staff. Staff know the children's support needs well and children feel confident to seek help from staff when they need it. One child said that they trust every member of staff, while another told inspectors that the staff are the best part about living in the home. Staff speak proudly about children's progress and achievements.

Children's independence skills improve significantly during their time in the home. Staff help children to build their confidence in their abilities gradually and help them to learn new, age-appropriate skills. One child now walks to school themselves and spends time with friends in the community, whilst another child now attends their scout group without staff support. Other children's personal care skills have improved, improving their health and self-esteem. Older children are proud to be role models for the younger children.

Children have frequent opportunities to influence their care. They are regularly asked about their preferences for activities and meals but are also central to decisions about the development of the home. Children's bedrooms are highly personalised and reflect their interests and passions. Staff understand how some children may prefer to communicate differently and help them to do so creatively. One child uses comic book strips to explore his feelings after difficult experiences. Another child, who has recently moved into the home, previously struggled with communication. Staff have supported and encouraged him, and he is now able to contribute to weekly 'Children's community meetings'.

Children's health needs are understood well by staff. Staff help children to attend health appointments and are persistent in their contact with medical professionals when they believe children need further assessment. Staff also help professionals to understand children's needs better. For example, one child has a hospital passport so medical staff understand how best to help them when they visit for treatment. As a result, medical appointments are now more accessible for children.

Children have enriching experiences thanks to the care and support they receive at the home. They are encouraged to explore their interests and to try new activities. The home is filled with stimulating resources for children, such as musical instruments, games and role play costumes. Children participate in a range of clubs, lessons and events. For example, one child recently performed on stage as part of their drama club while another child attends a weekly martial arts group and receives music lessons in the home. All children attended a short break to an activity resort together, for some children this was their first experience of a holiday.

Staff work flexibly with schools and other education providers to promote children's education as effectively as possible. Those children in the home who are in full time

education are thriving. One school professional said, 'Staff have gone to great lengths to support the child we work with, finding solutions to some very difficult problems.' Another said, 'The collaboration between school and home has had a huge impact in making the child's journey with us a success.' When children are not in school, staff provide engaging and structured educational activities in the home, while leaders work persistently with other professionals to arrange more formal education. This helps to minimise the impact on children's education.

Children are encouraged to explore their identities through discussions about their family and cultural backgrounds. Staff facilitate creative activities where children explore music, food and interesting information connected to their heritage, while also exploring their family history. Staff promote tolerance and diversity and help children to learn about other cultural celebrations throughout the year. As a result, children have a better understanding of the world that they live in.

Staff help children who move into the home to have the best possible experiences. Their moves are expertly planned by managers, who seek to fully understand each child's needs before they move in. Children often visit the home and contribute to preparing their new rooms. Staff involve all children in welcoming newly arrived children. This helps children to settle in as quickly as possible. Similarly, when children leave, staff celebrate their time in the home through leaving events and offer support if needed. For example, one child left the home, then experienced a breakdown of their new placement. They were welcomed back into the home and helped to understand and process their experiences, before later moving on again when they felt ready.

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

Staff have a deep understanding of the children's needs and are highly skilled in responding to children when they are upset. They work closely with the organisations therapists to continually monitor children's risks and to review the strategies they use to help children. Frequent clinical consultation means that staff can respond quickly to any changes to children's behaviour and that children receive informed help from staff. As a result, staff can identify when and how to support children more effectively and occasions when children have been distressed have reduced.

Managers take prompt and effective action to investigate when concerns are raised about the conduct of staff. They work closely with safeguarding partners such as social workers and the Local Authority Designated Officer. Appropriate measures are implemented to reduce risks to children during the investigation process.

Staff are highly aware of risks associated with children's use of the internet. There are appropriate measures in place to monitor children's activity and staff help children to learn how to keep themselves safe online. Staff worked with one child's parents to review the parental controls in place on mobile devices to ensure that the child remained safe when they were not in the home.

Physical intervention is used only when required to help keep the children or others safe. Staff are trained to use physical intervention effectively. Records of the use of restraint are of a high quality, and managers speak to both children and staff after any incidents. The manager has strong oversight in this area and scrutinises practice to ensure that restraint is only used when necessary. When poor performance is identified, it is challenged and addressed by managers.

Children do not go missing from the home because of the trusting relationships that they have with staff. On rare occasions when children leave the home without permission, staff follow them and encourage them to return to the home safely. Despite this, staff are knowledgeable about the processes that they would follow if children did go missing.

Children's achievements are enthusiastically celebrated by staff. They recognise how each child's success is individual and give children spontaneous rewards, which the children help to choose so that they are motivating. However, some records of the consequences put in place when children's behaviour is not appropriate, do not always demonstrate that a restorative approach was used and managers do not routinely review how effective each measure has been.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is led by a qualified and highly experienced registered manager who fosters an environment of positivity and aspiration for children. They are well respected by an exceptionally motivated staff team who are very complimentary about the support that they receive from the manager. One member of staff said, 'I truly cannot praise them highly enough for everything they have done for me.'

The registered manager is a strong advocate for children's rights. They help children to express their views about issues which are important to them. For example, they helped one child to write letters of complaint to professionals when the child was not happy with the services that they were provided. This challenge was successful, and there are now plans in place to meet the child's needs.

There is an open culture of reflection and consultation within the staff team. Staff handovers and daily debriefs demonstrate strong information sharing practice. Regular team meetings and consultation with therapists share learning and review staff practice.

Staff receive regular supervision and performance-related appraisal and say that they value these opportunities to understand how they can improve in their roles. Following challenging experiences, staff also utilise independent clinical supervision to support their wellbeing. During the last year, several staff have left the home. The impact on children has been mitigated because of the clear guidance and support that new staff have received from more experienced colleagues.

Feedback from other professionals is consistently positive. They say that staff know the children well and that the communication they receive from staff and managers is

excellent. One social worker said, '[Name of child] has grown there, he sees himself as part of the community which is down to the home.'

Staff provide therapeutically informed care to children and speak knowledgeably about how this influences the way they work. However, only a small number of staff have received formal training in the homes stated model of care. There are also barriers to staff receiving other training relevant to their roles, such as time constraints and course availability. As a result, some staff go long periods without completing all their required training. The manager has mitigated the impact that this has on children through careful rota planning and by providing informal training workshops while formal courses are arranged.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that any sanctions used to address poor behaviour should be restorative in nature, to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the staff caring for them and the wider community. The registered manager should ensure that records of sanctions reflect any restorative work that has been completed with children and that there are appropriate systems in place to review the effectiveness of any sanctions used. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.38)
- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate time, facilities and resources to support their training needs, and should understand the key role they play in the training and development of staff in the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 53, paragraph 10.11)

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: SC482299

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Hillcrest Children's Services Ltd

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

Responsible individual:

Registered manager: Susan Burry

Inspectors

Glen Strowbridge, Social Care Inspector
Mark Dawkins, Regulatory Inspection Manager

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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