

SC415347

Registered provider: Hillcrest Childrens Services (2) Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

A private company owns and manages this home. It is registered to provide care for up to four children who have had adverse childhood experiences that have led to associated trauma and complex behaviours.

The manager registered with Ofsted on 11 May 2020. She is suitably qualified and experienced.

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 December 2024

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **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: 27 June 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/06/2023	Full	Good
19/10/2022	Full	Good
14/07/2021	Full	Good
23/10/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Three children were living at the home at the time of inspection. Two children have moved on, and two children have moved in since the last inspection. The manager fully considers the needs of children who are coming to live at the home or who are leaving. Children have introductory visits to help them feel at ease. The wishes and feelings of the children already in the home are considered before a new child moves in. For example, a virtual call was arranged so the children could all meet in advance to alleviate any worries or anxieties.

Children who have moved on from the home have also experienced a planned move with the support of the manager. The manager has advocated for children and challenged local authority plans. One child was able to remain in the home after turning eighteen to enable a direct move to university.

All children are in education and making progress. One child's attendance is intermittent, but staff are working in partnership with the school and local authority to encourage attendance. A teacher at the child's school commented that the staff are doing all they can to encourage the child into school: 'They work well with us so we can support the child together.'

Children have all formed strong attachments with staff; they feel safe and have developed a sense of belonging. The staff understand each child's individual needs, so they understand how best to support them. This helps children to feel safe. Staff are responsive to children's needs and children are developing confidence and making progress in all aspects of their life.

Children are in good health and access local services. When there is a need for specialist support, the manager looks at how best this can be provided. Staff members talk to the children and encourage an open culture of discussion, information-sharing, advice and support to help children develop resilience and a greater sense of independence to manage their health needs.

Children are encouraged to join and attend clubs. When children express an interest in exploring new hobbies, they are supported. Staff strive to find new opportunities for the children to support their social development and build self-esteem.

Staff provide children with consistent care. They provide children with good support to help them explore and understand their emotions. This approach is helping children to develop resilience and contributes to their safety and increased stability. A social worker commented, 'This is the longest time the child has been in a home. They are the most settled they have been, and as a consequence, they [incidents] are greatly reducing.'

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

Staff understand the children's behaviours and risks; they implement strategies to support children, and as a result, the children are kept safe. Positive behaviour is rewarded, and consistent boundaries are implemented by staff. This approach is contributing to a reduction in challenging incidents. When incidents do occur, staff respond proportionately and consider the reasons behind the behaviour. Risk assessments are kept under review to ensure information to support the child is reflective of their current needs and that all staff follow a consistent approach.

The manager is clear about and follows procedures for responding to concerns about children's safety. When children raise concerns and make allegations, she works closely with their social worker, the independent reviewing officer and when required, the local authority designated officer to share information and help to investigate matters as needed. Children receive good support during this process.

The use of physical intervention is proportionate and used as a last resort by staff to keep children safe. Incidents increased when a new child moved in but have reduced since the child has become settled over time. Reporting and recording are timely, children are supported following an incident and there is managerial oversight. There was one shortfall noted, following a recent intervention, due to the manager being away from work. This was rectified during the inspection. New systems are being introduced to ensure that in the manager's absence, the responsible individual will be alerted to any report that requires managerial oversight.

There have been no episodes of children going missing from care. Each child has a plan for staff to follow should a child go missing from home. Managers and leaders have provided workshops to maintain staff knowledge and skills in this area of practice.

The children receive good support to learn about how to stay safe online. Well-trained staff have important conversations with children to educate and inform them about social media and online risks. Internet filters are installed at the home so that internet use can be managed effectively and children safeguarded. Staff are not risk-averse, and they have taken a proportionate approach tailored to the age and needs of each child living in the home. Children have developed skills appropriate to their age to navigate their online activity safely.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is adequately staffed to meet the needs of the children. Safer recruitment processes are followed, and when needed, the home uses consistent agency staff who are familiar to the children.

Staff feel well supported and morale is high. They receive training and regular reflective supervision to support their practice and development. The therapeutic model of care is embedded among the staff and is used effectively to support children.

Leaders and managers ensure that the home environment is maintained to a high standard and feels and looks like a family home. Personalised pieces of art, created by the children, are on display and photos of children are situated around the home. This creates a sense of permanence and belonging, which contributes to children feeling secure.

Managers have high aspirations for children. Staff say that the managers' leadership style is very good, and their support encourages them to continually improve practice to benefit children.

Team meetings are held monthly, and staff are given the opportunity to share information and refresh their knowledge around procedures. Staff contribute to the meetings and can reflect on their practice as a group. The home's in-house clinicians attend the meetings to offer support to staff practice.

Appropriate action to support children and address practice issues with staff is promptly taken by managers. There has been one shortfall with staff practice. While this was appropriately managed at the time, learning has not been fully embedded. Leaders and managers have assured this practice issue will be re-addressed with the staff team to embed clear expectations about keeping their personal possessions safe and not accessible to children.

Leaders and managers understand the strengths and weaknesses of the home. They are realistic about some areas that need to be developed further, particularly the changeover of the electronic records system, which is in the process of being integrated. The system at the time of inspection did not have safeguards to enable access to important information in the absence of the manager. Plans are in place to embed a new system and review the access to information to ensure that those who need access will be granted permissions accordingly.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that records that are kept electronically (Regulation 38) can be easily accessed by anyone with a legitimate need to view it and, if required, be reproduced in a legible form. In particular, the registered person should ensure that information stored by the manager can be accessed when they are away from the home if needed. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 14.2)
- The registered person should oversee the welfare of the children in their care through observation and engagement with the home's staff. In particular, ensure that staff know what is expected of them when it comes to keeping items safely stored away as needed and out of children's reach. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54 paragraph 10.23)

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: SC415347

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: Post vacant

Registered manager: Lisa Aspinall

Inspectors

Joanne Hawkins, Social Care Inspector

Julia Tompson, Social Care Inspector

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