

# 1254258

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

The children's home is owned and operated by a large independent provider. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for four young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

**Inspection dates:** 5 to 6 December 2017

**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:** first inspection since registration

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** not applicable

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** not applicable

## Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- Children are making good and sometimes excellent progress from their starting points. Particular progress is evident in school attendance and a reduction in challenging and aggressive behaviour.
- Staff are very good at recognising each child's individuality. Children's specific interests are supported and promoted.
- There is a clear focus on promoting positive behaviour. This is achieved through individualised reward charts. The systems in place have a clear, positive impact on children's behaviour.
- Staff improve children's understanding of equality and diversity issues in a creative and fun way, which they find easy to engage with.
- The home is warm and welcoming. Children's bedrooms are highly personalised. The home feels like a family home.
- When incidents of bullying occur, staff undertake direct work with children to improve their understanding of the impact they have on other children. One child has become the 'bullying champion' within the home and has embraced the role with enthusiasm.
- Individual sessions with children are detailed, and show how staff support children to express their feelings and learn strategies to manage their emotions.
- Physical intervention is used as a last resort. When incidents do occur, reports are very detailed and follow-up work with children is personalised to provide a greater impact.
- Management of the home is good. Staff report a supportive environment, a strong staff team and a positive ethos.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Children's risks should be recorded within their risk assessments. Where new risks arise, risk assessments should be updated to reflect the new risks.
- Some children are on the autistic spectrum or show traits of autism. Not all staff have completed the mandatory training in this area and none have yet completed face-to-face training, which was planned but cancelled. Training in this area would help staff to better understand and support children.

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
Not applicable		

## 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, 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 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 (Regulation 12(2)(a)(i)). Specifically, that risk assessments include all relevant risks for children and are updated as new risks become known.	03/01/2018

### Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that staff can access appropriate 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). Specifically, all staff should complete the home's mandatory online autism training and any other autism training available.

## Inspection judgements

### Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The children who are placed at the home make good progress in a range of areas. Some children who were not attending school now attend every day and enjoy their time there. Some children have significantly improved daily routines and personal hygiene. Other children have made progress in reducing their anger and aggression, and learning to express their emotions in more acceptable ways.

Children are supported to express their views and feelings. Each child has a blackboard in their bedroom that is personalised to them (for example, in the shape of a horse or a castle, to reflect their interests). When they struggle to express how they feel, they are encouraged to try to write it on the board, so that staff understand and can help them. One child has a 'stress drawer' in their bedroom where they keep a range of objects and activities that help them when they become angry or upset. Another child has a small climbing wall installed in his bedroom because climbing helps him to relax and manage

his emotions.

Children's individual hobbies and interests are promoted well. Staff understand what interests each child, and plan activities that they will enjoy. Where children have a very specific interest, such as caring for and riding horses, the staff ensure that they have access to these activities on a regular basis. Some children have an interest in music and they have several instruments that they are encouraged to play. The manager plans to turn an outbuilding into a music studio so that one of the young people can use a drum kit.

Weekly therapy sessions are offered to each child. These can be flexible around the child's wishes and feelings. For example, one child was having his therapy sessions while walking a member of staff's dog because this was an activity he enjoyed. The therapist has developed positive relationships with all of the children, and can educate staff on how best to support individual children. One example of this is advice given to staff by the therapist about ways of building a child's self-esteem and confidence, in the hope that he will be sufficiently confident to join a local football team in the future.

Staff support children to have contact with their families. They supervise contact as requested by the children's social workers. They also invite parents into the home to spend time with their children and make them feel welcome. This helps to ensure that contact is a positive experience for children and their parents. Staff also support families to implement the same routines and boundaries as are in place at the home, so that care is consistent.

Positive relationships exist between children and staff. Children can identify staff they like and trust. Children have also developed positive relationships with each other. This is a huge progression for one young person who was completely isolated from his peers at the point of placement.

Children's specific needs are well understood and addressed. Some children have sensory needs. One child used growling noises when he arrived, to express how he felt, but has been helped to reduce these. Another child has specific dietary needs and the home fully complies with advice from his GP about how to manage these.

Education in respect of culture, identity, equality and diversity is carefully introduced to children in a way that is age appropriate and interesting. Children are rewarded throughout the week for positive deeds, for which they receive raffle tickets. The raffle is drawn weekly, following a discussion about an equality and diversity topic. Children are rewarded with additional raffle tickets for participating and sharing their views during the discussion.

Children know how to complain, and have used the complaints system. One child made a complaint about a physical intervention and this was resolved to his satisfaction.

Young people in the home are on the autistic spectrum. Although staff understand the needs of children with autistic spectrum disorder well and are highly responsive to their

needs, none have had face-to-face training on autism and not all have completed the online autism training. This additional training would help them to improve their understanding of the condition.

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

From their starting points, risks for all children reduce at the home. This is due to robust risk assessment and risk management, alongside the consistent use of behaviour management strategies and implementation of boundaries.

Some children have made great progress in their ability to accept and adhere to boundaries. From the start of their placements, boundaries are implemented in a kind and consistent manner which the children quickly respond to. Children become familiar with their routines and know what is expected of them.

There have been no missing-from-home incidents since the home opened in June 2017. Missing from home was a high risk area for some children before they were placed here. The location of the home and the lack of familiar surroundings may contribute to the reduction, but the positive relationships that staff build with the children also represent a significant factor in reducing risk in this area.

One child had a specific risk of climbing at the point of placement. There were fears he would climb the trees in the garden and climb onto the roof of the home because these were behaviours he displayed prior to placement. The home has addressed this creatively by installing a small climbing wall in his bedroom, and also by enabling him to access safe climbing activities should he choose to do so.

The home focuses on rewarding positive behaviour, which works well for all of the children placed. Children each have personalised reward systems that enable them to work towards a large reward, but get smaller rewards along the way. Incentive charts are individually designed to reflect the child's interests. Staff understand what motivates children to show positive behaviour, and use this to achieve good results in behaviour management. Additionally, the home rewards each child throughout the week with raffle tickets for kind deeds or positive behaviour. Staff also award raffle tickets for engagement with sessions on topics such as e-safety, which raises children's awareness of risk. The children are enthusiastic participants, and are keen to win the raffle prize at the end of the week.

One child has a particular risk in vehicles. This is addressed in different ways, for example by settling him in the vehicle with staff support, and providing an activity to engage him, before others get into the vehicle, or by transporting him separately from the other children to activities or school.

There have been some incidents of bullying that the home has effectively addressed. Children who engage in bullying behaviour have individual sessions with staff to educate them about bullying. This may include watching short videos, or trying to understand

how the victim of their bullying felt. The home holds restoration meetings which have been highly successful, with young people being able to listen to each other's views, and express their own, and come to a resolution. One young person was appointed 'bullying champion' of the home following an incident of bullying. She responded very well to this, taking on the role with enthusiasm and commitment. She held a cake sale in a local primary school to raise awareness of bullying, and produced leaflets on bullying to distribute to the children. She then spent the proceeds from the sale on anti-bullying wristbands, which she then distributed to the children.

Much of the work done with children around risks and behaviour management is personalised to them. For example, following the use of a disciplinary measure, the home uses a theme or character that a child is interested in, such as Thomas the Tank Engine or Bart Simpson, to explain to them why there was a consequence in place. This helps children to be interested and engage in direct work, and improves the impact of the measure.

Physical intervention is used to manage some children's behaviour. This is used only when all other avenues of de-escalation have been tried, and only to protect the child from hurting themselves or others. Records of physical intervention are very detailed, and clearly show what de-escalation techniques have been used. All records include comments from the manager and the manager analyses the physical intervention data for patterns or trends on a monthly basis. Debriefs with children take place, and are often personalised and themed according to their interests to help them express themselves.

One child's risk assessment had not been updated with a recent significant risk relating to family contact. A requirement is made as a result of this.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The home has had a change of manager since it opened in June 2017. The new manager is not yet registered, but has submitted his application to the regulator. The new manager holds the appropriate management qualification.

The manager is enthusiastic and committed to the children in the home. He is very child focused, and wants the best possible progress and outcomes for each child. Children's needs are clearly at the forefront of all decision-making and their views are taken into consideration in all aspects of their care. The manager is creative and has many new ideas about how to provide the best care for children. All of the children in the home are making good progress and there are systems in place for measuring and recording progression. Systems for measuring progress in emotional resilience and social development are particularly well developed.

The staff team is relatively new. Some staff are experienced and qualified, while others are undertaking their level 3 qualification. The staff all show commitment to caring for the children, which is reflected in feedback from family members and social workers.

All staff have been through an induction process before starting to work with the children. Staff report that the induction process was helpful in preparing them for working in the home. Staff receive regular supervision, which they report is helpful. Staff also report that they have access to a wide range of training opportunities, some of which are mandatory and have to be completed within the first three months of employment.

Good monitoring systems are in place. The manager completes monthly monitoring checks which include seeking feedback from children, professionals and family members. The manager considers external monitoring to be helpful in identifying any areas of strength or areas for development. The manager has a good understanding of the home's strengths and weaknesses, and has clearly identified actions to progress and develop the home from his regulation 45 review of the quality of care.

Care delivered to children in the home is fully in line with the home's statement of purpose. This document is detailed and provides useful information about the services offered by the home.

There is ample evidence that the home works in conjunction with external agencies. Social workers and families report positively about the placement, and the local area's designated officer has recently been invited to visit the home. The local police community support officer also regularly visits the home to develop relationships with staff and children.

The manager is a strong advocate for the children in the home, and expresses his views about their best interests when he has any concerns about a placing authority's care plan.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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:** 1254258

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Witherslack Group Ltd

**Registered provider address:** Witherslack Group, Lupton Tower, Lupton, Carnforth  
LA6 2PR

**Responsible individual:** Marcia McLoughlin

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

## Inspector

Charlie Bamber: social care inspector



The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2017