

# 1247559

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This is a privately run children's home. It is registered to provide care for up to five young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home provides short-term care and assessment to identify the most appropriate type of future provision for young people. The manager has been registered with Ofsted since 19 September 2017.

**Inspection dates:** 29 to 30 October 2019

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account	<b>outstanding</b>
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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	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:** 22 February 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** sustained effectiveness

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/02/2019	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
16/08/2018	Full	Outstanding
30/05/2017	Full	Requires improvement to be good

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

### Recommendations

- Children's care plans should reflect that they are receiving care which meets their needs and promotes their welfare, taking into account of the child's gender, religion, ethnicity, cultural and linguistic background, sexual identity, mental health, any disability, their assessed needs, previous experiences and any relevant plans. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 14, paragraph 3.2)
- Staff should continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. Where there are safeguarding concerns for a child, their placement plan, agreed between the home and their placing authority, must include details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day to day basis. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)

### Inspection judgements

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

The home provides short-term care for young people with complex needs. In most cases, young people have experienced crisis situations or placement breakdowns and require a period of assessment and planning to indicate what long-term placement might best suit their needs.

Young people living in this home make outstanding progress. The staff team ensures that young people feel safe and welcomed when they arrive. They are very skilled at quickly forming positive and trusting relationships with young people. One social worker said, 'Within a week [young person's name] had started to settle and to mix with the staff and other young people there.'

When young people arrive at the home, many have not been in school for long periods of time. Staff understand the importance of education to young people's development and are extremely successful in supporting them to re-engage with education. There is excellent communication between the home and school and this ensures a high level of consistency for young people.

Young people thrive on the nurturing approach of staff. As a result, young people make progress in a very short period of time. Staff encourage young people to take part in a wide range of activities, both at home and in the local community. Staff are resourceful and creative. They actively seek opportunities for young people to engage with important childhood activities, such as playing games, using dressing-up boxes and enjoying stories at bedtime.

A comprehensive assessment of the young person's needs is undertaken during their placement. This assessment is an important tool to support commissioners to identify the most appropriate future placement and halt the cycle of placement breakdowns. Professionals from the in-house therapy team play a key role in the assessment process. They also support staff to develop individual strategies to work with young people.

Young people are prepared well for their move to future placements. Staff have created memory books for each young person to take with them. These capture special moments that they have experienced while at the home. One young person said, 'I want to thank staff for being kind and for making my stay feel like home, I liked it there, it was fun.'

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

Young people are safe and know that the staff care about them. One young person said, 'I feel safe here and know that staff are always here to help me. I arrived late at night and I was scared about what it would be like, but staff were kind and helped me to feel calmer. I feel like it's home now.'

Staff understand young people's individual needs and vulnerabilities well. The manager conducts a thorough impact risk assessment prior to agreeing to young people's placements. This ensures that young people are well matched and that staff can meet their needs. Risk assessments are kept updated; however, they do not always cover all known risk factors. Furthermore, the strategies for staff to employ are often generic and not individual to the young person. A recommendation has been made to address this.

Young people are settled and respond positively to the staff team's nurturing approach. Staff quickly establish routines and boundaries and, as a result, young people rarely engage in risk-taking behaviours. One social worker said, 'The staff have managed to strike a good relationship with [name of young person] and have helped him feel safe and settled there.'

Staff use incentives and praise to reinforce positive behaviours. This is successful and young people enjoy choosing rewards that are meaningful to them, such as trips to the theatre and museums. One young person said, 'I have made good progress since I have been here. I am managing to control my anger better and staff have really helped me with that.'

Staff are equipped with the experience and skills to manage young people's complex and challenging behaviours effectively. As a result, there are very few incidents where staff have to use physical interventions to manage situations. When incidents do occur, the manager has established effective arrangements for post-incident analysis. This means that lessons are learned and practice is constantly evolving.

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

The manager is passionate about providing high-quality services that nurture vulnerable young people. The manager and staff strive relentlessly to ensure that each young

person has a positive experience of living at the home. One social worker said, 'The child-centred approach of manager and staff is significant to helping young people in times of distress and had a direct positive impact on the young person we placed there.'

The manager provides strong leadership and is aspirational for young people. She takes appropriate steps to challenge other professionals and escalates issues appropriately to ensure positive outcomes for young people.

The manager has a very clear vision for the service and has promoted a culture of continuous improvement. She encourages staff to be innovative and develop new ideas to shape practice. One member of staff said, 'We share a passion and commitment to provide a warm and caring environment for young people.'

The staff team benefits from a comprehensive induction programme and access to regular training opportunities. This equips them with the skills they need to meet individual young people's needs. All staff either hold nationally recognised childcare qualifications or are working towards them. They receive regular supervision, which supports reflective practice and continuous professional development. There are highly effective internal communication systems in place, which means that staff work with young people in a consistent way.

Staff report that they feel supported by the manager and morale is high. One member of staff said, 'The manager is always there for you when you need her.'

## **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:** 1247559

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

**Registered provider:** Witherslack Group Ltd

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

**Responsible individual:** Marcella Bird

**Registered manager:** Deborah Woollams

## Inspector

Sophie Thomson, social care inspector

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