

1254258

Registered provider: Witherslack Group

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This privately operated children's home is registered for four children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Children placed at this home can access the organisation's registered school and therapeutic services.

The registered manager is qualified and experienced.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 23 March 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 March 2022

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| 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 | outstanding |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------|

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 27 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 27/01/2020 | Full | Outstanding |
| 27/11/2018 | Full | Outstanding |
| 05/12/2017 | Full | Good |

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The home is warm and welcoming. Staff engage with children in a very empathetic and supportive manner. Although there is often a lively and fun atmosphere, staff also ensure that the home feels calm and safe. Children are supported to develop consistent routines, particularly before school and at bedtime. This provides children with a sense of stability and security, without feeling institutional.

Children receive very effective help to do well at school. Each child is achieving or exceeding their education targets. Some children achieve good school attendance for the first time after moving to this home. When children go through periods in which school attendance dips, they are very well supported. Staff work well with schools to understand the reasons for non-attendance and to identify strategies to get children back into school. Children continued to attend school during the COVID-19 pandemic. This ensured that their routines were not disrupted.

The manager and staff have embraced the organisation's therapeutic model. As a result, 'therapeutic parenting' is embedded into staff practice. Staff provide consistent, empathetic and nurturing care.

Each child's individuality is respected and celebrated. The promotion of equality and diversity is a key strength of the home. Staff are also very good at helping children to be respectful and caring towards each other. As a result, children feel cherished and valued.

Placement stability is a feature of this home. Often, children have lived at the home for several years. As a result, they have secure attachments to staff. Planning for children to move into the home is of a very high quality. Managers take care to match the risks and vulnerabilities of new children with existing residents. Consequently, children have quickly settled into the home.

When the manager identifies that the home is no longer suitable for particular children, he communicates his reasons clearly to placing authorities. He then works constructively with the placing authorities to ensure that the placement ends in a planned, supportive manner. This means that children are given every opportunity to have successful transitions.

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

Children are well protected and feel safe in the home. Behaviour management strategies are well understood by staff. As a result, there is a calm, happy atmosphere most of the time. When children do find it difficult to behave well, staff intervene promptly, using their good relationships with children to de-escalate tensions. As a result, staff rarely need to resort to restraint and the use of sanctions is minimal.

Risk management strategies are effective but not overly controlling. Staff are very aware of children's vulnerabilities but find ways to help them to form friendships in the community and spend time with friends. When issues arise from children's behaviour in the community, managers respond appropriately, helping children to take responsibility for their actions and to improve their social skills. As a result, children feel part of their local community and are involved in a number of local clubs and groups. Children rarely leave the home without permission. When they do, staff take all necessary steps to locate them and return them safely.

Any concerns or complaints raised by children are well managed. When staff practice falls below the standards expected by the organisation, this is quickly and effectively addressed. Performance management systems ensure that staff provide high-quality, safe care.

Medication administration systems are generally safe. Any errors are quickly identified and addressed. Managers are reviewing current systems to further improve the way that medication administration is monitored and audited.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager has been in post since April 2021. He began work at the home following an unsettled period but quickly brought about improvement. He is a very strong leader who brings a sense of stability and calm to the home. He is very much valued by the staff and the children. Because he provides such high-quality support to staff, staff turnover is low and the staff team is increasingly consistent.

The manager is very well supported by his experienced and highly skilled deputy manager. They are a particularly strong management team. The manager receives additional support from senior managers in the organisation, who have a clear understanding of the home's strengths and areas for development.

Monitoring and quality assurance systems are extremely good. The manager is particularly well organised, which enables him to ensure that safeguarding, recruitment and performance management systems are very effective. When the home's independent visitor identifies any areas of potential improvement, they are fully addressed. The manager's own quality assurance processes complement the regular audits carried out by the organisation. As a result, continual improvement takes place.

Engagement with other agencies is particularly strong. The managers seek out support from specialist agencies as soon as a need is identified. As a result, each child receives the right support and has access to all the services that they require.

The way that managers work with children's families is also highly effective. Managers take considerable care to involve family members in all important decisions and share information transparently. As a result, parents and family

members feel well supported. They say that the managers help them to maintain strong relationships with their children.

Staff training is of a very high quality. Each member of staff receives a thorough induction, and then is provided with additional training to ensure that they understand children's particular needs. When specialist training is required, managers commission this quickly. As a result, staff are knowledgeable and insightful. The provision of bespoke training to address each child's emerging needs demonstrates the commitment that managers have to delivering the best possible quality of care.

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: 1254258

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group

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

Responsible individual: Marcella Bird

Registered manager: Andrew Armistead

Inspector

Philip Cass, Social Care Inspector

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