

# 1159763

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a private provider. It provides care for up to eight children who experience social and/or emotional difficulties.

The home is without a registered manager, although there is an application in progress.

Following the conclusion of the inspection on 15 December 2022, Ofsted received a whistle-blowing complaint on 22 December 2022. This identified potential shortfalls in the safeguarding arrangements at this home. Ofsted sought additional evidence from the children's placing local authorities and the provider to carry out this inspection.

**Inspection dates: 13 and 14 December 2022 and 30 December 2022**

**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 **requires improvement to be good**

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

**Date of last inspection:** 15 March 2022

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/03/2022	Full	Good
15/10/2019	Full	Good
20/11/2018	Full	Outstanding
09/01/2018	Full	Outstanding

## Inspection judgements

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

Children who live at the home are making good progress due to the care they receive from staff.

Staff use their skills to build trusting relationships with children. Staff care about the children and invest their time in getting to know them and promoting their welfare. Children have good relationships with staff.

Children are supported to make progress with their social and emotional development. Individual plans are developed in collaboration with a range of professionals. This contributes to a good understanding of the needs of children and how to meet those needs. Professionals have acknowledged the progress of children and attribute this to the care they receive. Children are provided with a nurturing environment that supports them to learn how to regulate their emotions and helps them feel safe.

Children are supported to make academic progress in the on-site education provision. Most children attend regularly, and children who have previously not attended school now attend regularly. When children refuse to attend school, staff encourage them to take part in alternative educational activities. Plans are put in place to support children with their continued learning and to source alternative education, training or employment. This helps children to achieve their personal goals and aspirations for the future.

Children are in good health and staff support them to attend their medical appointments. Children also have access to the home's on-site therapy and occupational therapy professionals. Where children need additional specialist support, the staff work with agency partners to provide the necessary care.

Children, regardless of their needs and abilities, are able to access a range of activities. Some children attend groups and clubs, while others participate in sports and exercise. Children are encouraged to pursue their hobbies and have opportunities for new experiences. This supports children to develop their talents and interests.

Staff capture photos of the children's memories in books for them to keep when they move on from the home. This is a valuable record of the children's time in the home and will help them to understand and remember their childhood journey.

Staff help children to share their views and wishes through a variety of mediums. Children's meetings take place regularly. Staff ensure that all children's views are heard by separating the meetings in line with children's age and understanding. This means that all children have an equal voice, which helps them to feel valued.

Children are provided with a guide to the home when they move in. This helps them to understand what they can expect from living there and is a useful source of information. However, the format of the guide means that this document is not accessible to all children. As a result, some children may miss out on important information which would support them in settling into their home.

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

Children see the staff as approachable and trustworthy and can rely on them to keep them safer.

Staff are good role models who encourage positive behaviours from children. There is a learning culture which supports staff to develop their understanding of children's behaviours and adapt their responses to meet their needs. With the support of a multi-disciplinary team, staff develop and implement effective de-escalation techniques. This has resulted in incidents of physical intervention reducing over time.

When restraints are used, staff keep detailed records which demonstrate the need for intervention. Staff receive regular training to ensure that their practice remains in line with regulation and promotes the safety and well-being of children.

Staff have developed proactive plans to discourage children from going missing from the home. These include staggering the times that children leave the school building and having increased staffing available to support children home. Children are spoken to when they return home after an episode of going missing from the home. This helps staff to understand why children go missing and to review their planned responses.

There are coordinated plans and risk assessments in place for children. These are informed by a targeted multi-agency approach which identifies children's individual needs and reviews plans to mitigate risks. However, these documents are not always signed and do not demonstrate the manager's oversight of the actions staff must take to keep children safer.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good**

The home has been without a registered manager since November 2021. A manager was appointed but they subsequently left the organisation. A new manager is now in post and their application is in progress. This has had an impact on the leadership direction of the home and therefore the stability for children and staff. This has in turn led to a number of changes of staff, which further exacerbates the consistency of care for children.

Leaders have not addressed one of the requirements from the previous inspection. The manager has identified that staff are still not consistently signing the medication records for children. This has been raised through team meetings and individual

supervision sessions due to reoccurring instances. While there is no direct impact on the children, the response is slow, which leaves continued gaps in the home's records.

The new manager has high aspirations for the children and the home. He is supported by an experienced responsible individual. Both know the children and the home well and have been able to demonstrate the progress children have made. The manager has cultivated positive working relationships with his staff team and other professionals. The feedback from professionals and parents has been positive in terms of his impact at the home. Feedback includes improvements in communication and the coordination of children's care.

The organisation has introduced programmes to support staff development and progression. New staff attend the 'care academy', which supports them in completing their mandatory training. There is also an offer of support and space to reflect on the practicalities of the role. In addition, staff who wish to progress into management roles receive targeted support to advance their careers. Staff comment positively about this offer and the effect it has on their job satisfaction. This prepares staff for the rigours of their role and is a positive response to a period of instability.

Staff benefit from regular supervision sessions which provide a space to discuss practice and personal development. There is evidence of challenge when practice falls below the expected level, and managers use supervision sessions to support staff to make improvements. This ensures that staff are well supported and that practice in the home remains safe.

## 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
<p>The registered person must make arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home.</p> <p>In particular the registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>a record is kept of the administration of medicine to each child. (Regulation 23 (1) (2)(c))</p> <p>In particular, the registered person must ensure that staff sign the records in line with the organisation's policy. This requirement is repeated from the previous inspection.</p>	27 January 2023
<p>The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which—</p> <p>include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child;</p> <p>are kept up to date; and</p> <p>are signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b)(c))</p>	27 January 2023

### Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that the home produces a children's guide. The guide must be made available to all children when their placement in the home is agreed (or on arrival at the home if the placement is made in an emergency) and must be age appropriate, provided in an accessible format and explained to each child to make sure that they understand it. ('Guide to the Children's Home Regulations, including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph 4.21)

## **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:** 1159763

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

**Registered provider:** Witherslack Group Limited

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

**Responsible individual:** Lee Riley

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

## Inspectors

Deb Duffy, Social Care Inspector  
Cat Clasper, Social Care Inspector

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