

1244160

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is one of several children's homes operated by a national provider. The staff provide care for up to eight children who experience social and emotional difficulties.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since 19 August 2022.

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 January 2023

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

Date of last inspection: 5 January 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/01/2022	Full	Good
09/10/2019	Full	Good
11/12/2018	Full	Good
14/12/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children make good progress due to the individualised care provided by a skilled team of staff who know the children well.

Staff build very positive relationships with the children. Children can identify trusted staff who they can talk to if they have a concern. There has been one complaint since the last inspection, which was promptly resolved.

Staff work closely with all health professionals to ensure that children's health needs are assessed and managed effectively and that they can access specialist therapeutic support if required. In one example, a psychotherapist linked to the home has sensitively supported one child to come to understand his past and to develop a more positive outlook about his present and future. There are no concerns in relation to smoking or misusing drugs or alcohol.

Children's views are sought regularly and are valued. Staff listen to children and support them to influence the way they are cared for. For example, through key-work sessions and children's meetings, staff have involved children in the design and decoration of their rooms and the home.

Children's contact with their families is promoted well. There is a clear focus on what matters to the children. Staff show sensitivity when managing and supporting family relationships. One parent spoke positively about how the staff have worked in partnership with her to support her child. She is particularly pleased with how staff have been very accommodating in providing transport to enable the family to spend time together.

Staff support children based on positive relationships and therapeutic encouragement rather than consequences. There are clear and reasonable boundaries in place to encourage children to be productive. For example, electronic devices are removed during school hours to promote attendance at school.

Most children have good attendance at school. However, due to a recent unsettled period in the home, some children have experienced a dip in attendance. There is thoughtful support in place and staff are working hard to maintain healthy routines and encourage attendance.

The home is spacious, comfortable and well furnished. Children like their bedrooms and enjoy personalising them. Consequently, each bedroom reflects an aspect of the child's personality, individuality and their personal interests and hobbies. However, feedback from two social workers indicates that staff could do more to encourage children to broaden their experiences in relation to activities.

Children's bedrooms have an institutional feel due to them being fitted with door alarms. As a result, the environment is not as homely as it could be. Managers recognise that the use of door alarms needs to be supported by clear and regularly reviewed rationale.

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

Managers and staff demonstrate a commitment to keeping children safe. The leaders and managers have identified the impact that one child is having on the home, and there have been several incidents between children recently. There is a robust plan in place to manage this situation and get the home back to a more settled environment. Staff are managing this well and intervene effectively to ensure children's safety.

Most children have made progress in terms of maintaining positive behaviours. Staff use creative strategies to manage behaviour without the use of consequences or approaches that may feel punitive to children. Physical intervention is only used as a last resort and always includes staff and children being given opportunities to reflect on incidents and learn.

Staff recognise where they fit into wider safeguarding networks. They can identify all external agencies that play a role in supporting the safety and well-being of children. Staff understand how to raise concerns to ensure that good safeguarding practice is followed. One incident where a child made an allegation was dealt with swiftly, and all relevant agencies were notified.

Staff demonstrate good knowledge in key areas of safeguarding, such as online safety risks to children and bullying. They understand where individual children may be vulnerable and intervene effectively to keep them safe. Good practice is underpinned by clear, detailed records and plans that clearly identify children's needs and outline the support they need to stay safe.

There have been no incidents of children going missing from the home since the last inspection and no incidents of concern relating to children being at risk in the local community.

Safe recruitment processes are in place and are implemented by leaders and managers to ensure that only staff who are of good character are permitted to work in the home. Children are involved in the recruitment process and their views are considered when deciding who is employed to look after them.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager demonstrates a passionate commitment to ensuring high standards of care for children and provides good management support to staff. In return, staff respect and value his leadership.

There is a consistent staff team in place. Support structures are strong and staff at all levels benefit from regular and effective supervision. This supports them to manage the practical and emotional challenges of their role and is complemented by regular team meetings and handovers.

The registered manager has a detailed knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. The senior managers are hands-on and visible in the home. They model good practice, which helps to ensure that there is a shared ethos and that children are cared for consistently in line with the home's statement of purpose.

The registered manager works effectively in partnership with parents and other professionals. Feedback from parents and external professionals, such as social workers, is very positive regarding communication and partnership working. This demonstrates a culture of openness, which keeps children's needs at the heart of decision-making and ensures that children benefit from meaningful joint working.

There are effective systems for monitoring the quality of care. Serious events are reviewed by the registered manager along with other significant areas of practice, such as the frequency and quality of key-work sessions with children.

Leaders and managers are taking steps to manage an unsettled period in the home due to some difficult relationships between children. Staff have been resilient and have remained focused on achieving positive outcomes for children. The current situation could have been anticipated due to the known risks and behaviours of children coming into the home. The manager of the home has reflected on this and understands that the assessment for children coming into the home needs to be more rigorous to ensure that their range of needs can be managed within the existing group of children.

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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff—</p> <p>manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other;</p> <p>that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(iv)(b))</p> <p>In particular, when children come to live in the home, ensure that their needs are compatible with the group of children already living in the home.</p>	31 March 2023
<p>The enjoyment and achievement standard is that children take part in and benefit from a variety of activities that meet their needs and develop and reflect their creative, cultural, intellectual, physical and social interests and skills.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph requires the registered person to ensure—</p> <p>that staff help each child to—</p> <p>develop the child's interests and hobbies;</p> <p>participate in activities that the child enjoys and which meet and expand the child's interests and preferences; and</p> <p>make a positive contribution to the home and the wider community; and</p>	31 March 2023

that each child has access to a range of activities that enable the child to pursue the child's interests and hobbies. (Regulation 9 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(b))	
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Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that the home provides a nurturing and supportive environment that meets the needs of the children. In most cases, children's homes should be homely, domestic environments which seek as far as possible to maintain a domestic rather than 'institutional' impression. In particular, leaders and managers should review the use of the door alarm system to establish if it is necessary. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.9)

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: 1244160

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

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

Responsible individual: Leigh Bown

Registered manager: Ryhan Burrows

Inspector

Hannah Cox, Social Care Inspector

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