

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.

At the time of the inspection, seven children were living in the home.

There has been no manager in post since 4 May 2023.

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 December 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: 10 January 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/01/2023	Full	Good
05/01/2022	Full	Good
09/10/2019	Full	Good
11/12/2018	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children have built trusted relationships with staff who nurture and care for them. There is a new, consistent team of staff who know the children well and set appropriate boundaries. Children feel settled in the home.

Children have been supported sensitively to move in and out of the home, and clear planning is in place to ensure compatibility. Children who move into the home are welcomed by staff and the other children already living in the home. One social worker said, 'When [name of child] moved in, she was difficult to engage, but there was good liaison with the previous home, and they waited for them to choose items for their bedroom at their request.'

Children's views are valued, and children are listened to. Opportunities are given through regular key-work sessions and 'Back to the Future' forms, where children choose meals and activities and have a say in how they want the home to look. A wish list presentation beautifully captures each child's views, and changes have been made because of this. Children know how to make a complaint and can talk to staff about any worries or concerns.

The home is spacious and well furnished. Children like their bedrooms and enjoy personalising them. Each child's bedroom reflects an aspect of their personality and their personal interests and hobbies. Children are proud of their bedrooms, their posters, make up and games consoles.

Children have access to a wide variety of activities, some of which they have never experienced before. Children enjoyed a holiday and have requested to go again. Activity planners show a variety of activities in the home, such as football, celebration days, baking and movie nights. Children are happy to spend time in each other's company after school, eating meals, going to the arcades and getting haircuts, for example. This gives children a family-like experience and a sense of belonging.

Children spending time with family is a clear focus for staff and is promoted well. Staff show sensitivity when managing and supporting family relationships and work in partnership with families to support what matters most to children.

Children make progress in relation to their attendance and achievement in education. Close links between the home and school ensure that children experience consistent and well-informed care. For example, one education specialist said that staff know the children well and work with the clinical team, which helps to ensure a holistic and consistent approach.

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

The manager and staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and ensure that they work together with other professionals. Incidents are well managed, and levels of physical interventions are monitored through a detailed analytical spreadsheet each month. Staff reflect on incidents to develop strategies to reduce them.

Staff have a good understanding of the individual vulnerabilities of each child. There are effective strategies in place to help keep children safe, and these are clearly set out in the children's written risk assessments. However, not all staff are trained in de-escalation and restraint techniques. Managers have recognised this shortfall and are committed to ensuring that, in future, all staff receive this training before working with children.

Staff encourage positive behaviour through the use of rewards and praise. For example, children earn additional pocket money for achieving targets they choose and can receive a takeaway brunch at the weekend if they have achieved a specific goal, linking (or relating) to bedtime routines, for instance. Children are supported to learn from their behaviour and are given time to reflect and restore through the use of consequences that are appropriate and proportionate.

Children are supported to be safe online and in the community. Appropriate safeguards are in place, and staff support children through frequent key-work sessions and using additional resources to understand risks, including those relating to the internet, criminal behaviour and substance misuse.

Safe recruitment practices ensure that only appropriately vetted individuals work at the home and provide care for children. Senior staff are aware of their responsibilities to ensure that effective health and safety processes are in place.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager left the home in May 2023. A new manager has been appointed, and they have submitted their application to register with Ofsted.

Staff recruitment and retention have been particularly challenging for the home since the last inspection. Leaders and managers have worked hard to keep the impact of this on children to a minimum, and staff feel positive about the day-to-day support provided by senior leaders and the newly appointed manager.

The experienced manager is passionate and has high expectations of care, with a strong commitment to improving outcomes for children. One professional said, 'Since the manager started, children receive nurture and care, their horizons have been broadened and they are doing an amazing job.'

Leaders and managers are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and have a comprehensive development plan that identifies areas for improvement. Monitoring systems ensure that the manager has good oversight of records.

Staff have built strong working relationships with each other. There is a real sense of teamwork, and the management arrangements in place provide a supportive, encouraging and caring culture in the home for everyone. This provides a stable team for the children and a relaxed feel in the home.

Positive partnership working helps to build trust and engagement. Social workers are positive about their working relationships with the manager and staff and say that they are kept well informed. One social worker spoke about a recent meeting where the manager was open to suggestions and followed these up straight away.

Staff receive training to meet the specific needs of the children, which staff described as amazing. However, the induction process and supervision for new staff has been inconsistent. This is because there have been missed opportunities to support all staff to feel confident in their role and give staff time to reflect on practice through a formal process.

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, The 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—</p> <p>ensure that each employee completes an appropriate induction.</p> <p>The registered person must ensure that all employees—</p> <p>receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (1)(a) (4)(b))</p>	2 February 2024

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that all staff are appropriately trained in the principles of restraint and any restraint techniques used in the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.57)

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: Lupton Tower, Lupton, Carnforth, Lancashire LA6 2PR

Responsible individual: Leigh Bown

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Hannah Cox, Social Care Inspector

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