

1244160

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is run by a private organisation that operates several children's homes. The home is registered to provide care for up to eight children with social and emotional difficulties. At the time of the inspection, five children were living at the home. The provider also operates a school that is linked to the home.

There has been a vacant registered manager post since January 2024. A manager has been appointed and has applied to register.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision.

Inspectors were aware during this inspection that serious child protection allegations were being investigated by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate allegations of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the allegations were considered alongside other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.

Inspection dates: 17 and 25 June 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 1 October 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
01/10/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
19/12/2023	Full	Good
10/01/2023	Full	Good
05/01/2022	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

The home is not as warm and welcoming as it could be. Children's bedrooms, bathrooms and other areas of the home are not in a good enough condition in terms of cleanliness and repair. Although there are arrangements and plans in place to address the maintenance issues imminently, this shortfall has been identified at the last two inspections. Therefore, leaders and managers have failed to take prompt action to ensure that children live in a nurturing and homely environment that supports their well-being and daily needs.

Children attend the organisation's school. Education is a positive experience for some children, who make progress and achieve academically. However, for two children, there is a lack of opportunity to experience learning and educational activities. Furthermore, there is a lack of urgency in leaders and managers in exploring the reasons why some children have not successfully engaged in their education. As a result, not all children are making sufficient progress in their education.

Staff help children to develop independence skills that are appropriate to their abilities and interests. This includes staff encouraging some children to be involved in day-to-day tasks, such as managing their laundry, making breakfast, cooking and baking. Children have opportunities to make choices and staff take their wishes and feelings into account when making decisions.

Children know how to share their views and know how to make a complaint, if needed. The manager takes complaints made by children seriously. Children's complaints are recorded and responded to, and children are given support and reassurance during and after this process.

Children enjoy spending time with staff. The relationships between the staff and the children are emotionally warm and caring. Staff support children to maintain and further develop relationships with family, friends and other people who are important to them.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

There are shortfalls in some areas of safeguarding practice. For instance, when allegations have been made regarding inappropriate conduct of staff, these are not consistently or sufficiently considered by leaders and managers. Records regarding these allegations do not reflect that concerns are always addressed conclusively with the respective staff member. Furthermore, leaders and managers do not demonstrate sufficient professional curiosity and fail to identify and take appropriate and timely action to ensure that children are fully safeguarded while matters are considered.

There have been several occasions when serious incidents and other safeguarding matters have not been notified to Ofsted in a timely manner. This means that the regulator does not always have a full understanding of recent events in the home and the actions taken by leaders and managers to ensure children's safety and welfare.

Incidents relating to children's behaviour are well recorded and managed effectively, with a focus on reflection and learning on what happened. Managers maintain effective oversight throughout the process. Following incidents, debriefs are carried out with both children and staff. These discussions are reflective and supportive and help children to understand what happened.

Safer recruiting processes are thorough. This includes overseas checks and further references if deemed necessary. As a result, children are cared for by suitable staff who strive to promote their well-being and keep them safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers requires improvement to be good

The manager was appointed in June 2024, and they have applied to register. Since the last inspection, there has been a period of change. This is specifically in relation to changes to the staff team and leadership of the home. There is now a new responsible individual for this home. This period of change has contributed to mixed outcomes for children.

Staff say that they have felt unsettled due to the changes that have occurred since the last inspection. However, more recently, staff say that they feel better supported, with clearer guidance in place. The staff team is relatively new and is still developing in terms of experience and confidence. As a result, the period of instability has also been unsettling for children. This is because inconsistency and the quality of care they receive have limited their progress.

The manager carries out reviews of the quality of care provided in the home and evaluates the experiences of the children living there. However, these reviews lack a thorough analysis of how the care provided contributes to better outcomes for children, therefore limiting the value in guiding improvements that are required in the home.

Staff are provided with regular supervision sessions that focus on their welfare and support their practice. Additionally, there are regular team meetings and child-focused meetings supported by the therapy team. This provides opportunities for staff to come together and discuss the needs of the children along with their own support needs.

Despite the shortfalls identified at this inspection, the manager shows a strong understanding of and a commitment to improving the service. She has developed trusting relationships with children and has gained respect from the staff. The manager has a clear vision for the future development of the home to secure ongoing positive outcomes for children.

The leadership team is committed to the care and well-being of the children and has plans to address the areas of concern. However, these plans are in their infancy and are not yet embedded in the culture and day-to-day running of the home.

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
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child; and enable each child to participate in the daily life of the home. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(i)(i)) In particular, ensure that the home environment is maintained at an acceptable standard for the children, with prompt attention given to areas needing renovation, redecoration or repair. This requirement is restated.	11 August 2025
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff—	11 August 2025

assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies; 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)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)(b)) In particular, ensure that there are effective arrangements in place to manage allegations, and that safeguarding concerns and incidents are reported to the appropriate professionals for review and that follow-up action is taken to protect children where required.	
The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there; and there is any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious. (Regulation 40 (4)(c)(e))	11 August 2025
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare.	11 August 2025

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home’s statement of purpose; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(g)(i)(h)) In particular, ensure that there is a sufficient, experienced and stable staff team in place that consistently meets the needs of the children, and that any reviews relating to the quality of care that children receive are meaningful.	
The education standard is that children make measurable progress towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— help each child to achieve the child’s education and training targets, as recorded in the child’s relevant plans; support each child’s learning and development, including helping the child to develop independent study skills and, where appropriate, helping the child to complete independent study; understand the barriers to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers; help each child to understand the importance and value of education, learning, training and employment. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))	11 August 2025

In particular, ensure that children who are not accessing education have a regular routine and are consistently supported to engage in meaningful activities when not in school.	
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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'.

The inspection started on 17 June 2025. It was paused in line with [Ofsted inspections and visits: deferring, pausing and gathering additional evidence](#) policy. The inspectors returned on 25 June 2025 to complete the inspection.

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:

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspectors

Sharron Dormand, Social Care Inspector
Hannah Cox, Social Care Inspector

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