

1244160

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Assurance 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, six children were living at the home.

A new manager has been appointed, who has applied to register with Ofsted.

Inspection date: 26 March 2025

Date of last inspection: 1 October 2024

Judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Information about this inspection

At this inspection, the inspector evaluated:

- the care of children
- the safety of children
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

The inspector has looked closely at the experiences and progress of children, using the social care common inspection framework. This assurance 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'.

Findings from the inspection

There have been improvements to the environment. The home has been redecorated recently and there are new soft furnishings. Children's bedrooms have been personalised in line with their wishes. One child has pet guinea pigs and mice in their room and they take pride in looking after them.

Children's education experiences vary. One child is not currently in education, and they are not engaging in any other activity during the day. Staff are struggling to ensure another child maintains a good sleep hygiene routine that ensures they have adequate sleep. Consequently, the child's school attendance is low.

Children are not supported to develop consistently positive relationships with each other. There is insufficient staff supervision of children, and as a result, incidents of children hurting each other have occurred.

Children are not supported to respect and value female staff. Some children are frequently using negative language towards female staff. This means that the children are vulnerable to developing inappropriate ideology about females in the community. While there are time limits and age restrictions on internet usage, children can watch inappropriate material online, which is contributing to their use of inappropriate language towards female staff. Furthermore, one child is expressing racist views towards staff. Keywork sessions are being conducted with the intent of addressing this issue. However, managers have not demonstrated that they have given sufficient thought to which member of staff is most appropriate to complete this work with the child to ensure it has the best chance of success.

When children are struggling to manage their emotions and demonstrate this through their behaviour, staff make appropriate use of physical restraint. However, the incidents are not always overseen by managers, and staff carry out peer debriefs. When there is a serious incident, managers carry out debriefs with staff. They also help staff to reflect on practice during team meetings and meetings with the organisation's clinical team.

Children do not feel safe and protected at the home. Three children complained that the home is 'too noisy' and that staff do not understand them. Some of the children spoke about a recent incident that has made them feel upset. Staff are not diligent enough in ensuring that the children who are traumatised by observing incidents are supported in the same way as the children who are involved in the incident.

Children's plans are not kept up to date and do not clearly explain to staff how to care for children and keep them safe. When children are moving on to different placements, there are no clear plans that provide details of the support they need to have a successful transition.

Staff are committed to providing the best support and care to the children. Reparative work and key-work sessions are conducted but are not wholly successful in improving children's experiences and progress.

Due to recent incidents, leaders and managers have increased staffing levels. Staff report that they receive good support and supervision from managers. Staff are sufficiently trained to work with the children and meet their needs. However, a new member of staff is not receiving sufficient supervision to ensure they understand core aspects of their role.

A new manager joined the team last year and their application to register with Ofsted is in progress. The manager's plans and aspirations have not been fully established and need more time to be embedded.

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

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 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. 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. ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(a)(e))	20 May 2025
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. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b))	20 May 2025
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust;	20 May 2025

an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c) (2)(b))	
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— 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; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv))	20 May 2025
The registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b))	20 May 2025
The registered person must ensure that— within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes— the name of the child;	20 May 2025

details of the child’s behaviour leading to the use of the measure; the date, time and location of the use of the measure; a description of the measure and its duration; details of any methods used or steps taken to avoid the need to use the measure; the name of the person who used the measure (“the user”), and of any other person present when the measure was used; the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure; and a description of any injury to the child or any other person, and any medical treatment administered, as a result of the measure; within 48 hours of the use of the measure, the registered person, or a person who is authorised by the registered person to do so (“the authorised person”)— has spoken to the user about the measure; and has signed the record to confirm it is accurate; and within 5 days of the use of the measure, the registered person or the authorised person adds to the record confirmation that they have spoken to the child about the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(vi)(vii)(viii)(b)(i)(ii)(c)(iv))	
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Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that staff support and enable children to resume full-time education as soon as possible. (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’, page 28, paragraph 5.15)

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: Richard Humphreys

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Shaheda Dhandia, Social Care Inspector

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