

# 1244280

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a private provider. It provides care for up to seven children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

The manager has been in post for seven years.

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

### Inspection dates: 2 and 3 June 2025

|                                                                                           |             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account | <b>good</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|

|                                                             |      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 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:** 28 August 2024

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement   |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| 28/08/2024      | Full            | Good                   |
| 01/08/2023      | Full            | Good                   |
| 10/08/2022      | Full            | Good                   |
| 29/03/2022      | Interim         | Improved effectiveness |

## Inspection judgements

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

Since the last inspection, two children have moved on from the home and two children have moved in. The transition for children moving in is well thought out and planned. The manager considered the needs of all children during the process and how each child would be affected by new children coming to the home.

Children have structured daily routines. All but one child attend full-time education at the on-site school. Some of the children's education attendance had been poor before moving to this home. One child is currently undertaking their GCSE exams. Staff have provided them with a quiet area to study and are helping them to prepare to achieve their academic potential.

Children's health needs are being met. Staff talk to children about their well-being, and they encourage children to attend their health appointments.

Children see their families in line with their plans. This is well supported by staff. Parents said that they were happy with the care their child receives and that communication with staff is helpful.

Some of the children have lived in the home for sustained periods. This provides children with a sense of belonging and a place they can reliably call home. Most of the time, the children have positive and meaningful relationships with one another. When fall out occurs, staff support children to mutually agree to be civil with each other and move on in their relationships.

The home is well maintained and furnished to a high standard. It is warm and welcoming, and children's bedrooms are personalised to reflect their likes and interests.

Children have mixed experiences of living at the home. One child said they have had lovely activities and enjoyable experiences. While children do have these opportunities, there are times when children have negative experiences. For example, children said that some staff shout at them and that some staff just want to spend time on their personal mobile phones.

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

Children rarely go missing from home, but when they do, there are plans that provide staff with clear guidelines to follow. This helps staff to respond effectively to incidents. On their return, children are offered the opportunity to speak to someone independently so they can talk about any reasons that may have led to them being away from the home.

Children receive support to help them understand the impact of unwanted behaviours. Staff reflect with children to help them recognise their different emotions and consider better ways of dealing with them. The children's wishes and feelings are clearly captured from these conversations to help others understand how to help children.

Staff understand how to keep children safe when they are using technology. They use age-appropriate restrictions on the internet, preventing children from accessing materials that could be harmful. Younger children are observed by staff when they use the internet.

Children's risk assessments identify all known risks to the child. They provide staff with steps to follow to mitigate the risks and understand the actions they should take to keep children safe.

Bedroom door alarms are not routinely used. There are times when it is felt that they need to be in place, and when this happens, they are regularly reviewed and removed at the earliest and safest opportunity.

There has been one incident where staff and children have raised their concerns about some staff using inappropriate restrictive techniques. Staff moved a child from one area of the home to another, along with unnecessary shouting at the child. One child said that they had witnessed this poor practice and yet nobody had spoken to them about it. This does not help children to feel safe.

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

Leaders and managers have not always ensured that concerns around staff practice have been fully investigated. This means that where shortfalls have been identified, they have not been addressed. This relates to one use of physical intervention and staff shouting at the children. Furthermore, this incident was not shared with the child's placing authority, which denied it the opportunity to determine what steps should be taken to support the child. This incident was also not reported to Ofsted, preventing the regulator from having full oversight of the risks to children.

Children know how to make a complaint. However, some said that they are fearful of repercussions they may face from staff should they do so. Furthermore, some staff and children said they feel excluded by other staff members when they do complain to managers. Children also feel uncomfortable when staff bring their own children into their home. Children have raised these concerns with management, but felt that nothing has changed.

Staff receive regular practice-related supervision that is reflective. However, when the manager raises concerns about staff performance with leaders, sometimes these concerns do not get raised with the relevant staff member. When performance issues

are raised with staff, little progress is made in supporting staff to improve their practice.

Staff say they feel supported by the manager. Staff are suitably trained to meet the needs of the children living at the home. When specific training has been identified relevant to a child's needs, this has been sourced and staff have attended to improve their understanding about how to meet the children's needs.

The manager has regular oversight of everything recorded, which is currently a mixture of electronic recordings and paper files. The home is in the process of moving to a full electronic system, which will allow for further consistency and strengthen management oversight.

Staffing is sufficient to meet the needs of the children living at the home. Staff are safely recruited. Newly recruited staff receive an induction and regular supervisions to monitor their progress.

## What does the children's home need to do to improve?

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person 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 must comply within the given timescales.

| Requirement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Due date       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| <p>Restraint in relation to a child is only permitted for the purpose of preventing—</p> <p>injury to any person (including the child);</p> <p>serious damage to the property of any person (including the child).</p> <p>Restraint in relation to a child must be necessary and proportionate. (Regulation 20 (1)(a)(b) (2))</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 31 August 2025 |
| <p>The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that—</p> <p>helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and</p> <p>promotes their welfare.</p> <p>In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to—</p> <p>understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home;</p> <p>demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on—</p> <p>feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received.</p> <p>(Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(f)(g)(ii))</p> | 31 August 2025 |
| <p>The registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if—</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 31 August 2025 |

there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there.

A notification made under this regulation—

must include details of—

the matter;

the other persons, bodies or organisations (if any) who or which have been notified; and

any actions taken by the registered person as a result of the matter.

(Regulation 40 (4)(c) (5)(a)(i)(ii)(iii))

## 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:** 1244280

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

**Registered provider:** Witherslack Group Limited

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

**Responsible individual:** Richard Matthews

**Registered manager:** Michelle Hird

## Inspectors

Angela Ross, Social Care Inspector  
Rachel Webster, Social Care Inspector

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