

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 operated by a private provider. It provides care for up to 7 children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted on 29 Mar 2018. At the time of the inspection, 7 children were living in the home and all of them were spoken to.

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 May 2026

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: 2 June 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
02/06/2025	Full	Good
28/08/2024	Full	Good
01/08/2023	Full	Good
10/08/2022	Full	Good

Summary of findings

Children are making good progress, especially with their education. Staff ensure that there are good routines for children and build positive relationships with them. With the support of staff, children are developing their confidence and building the necessary social and emotional skills to help them progress in different areas of their lives.

Staff and leaders benefit from the support of an in-house therapist to ensure that the needs of the children are fully understood and met.

Restraint is not used regularly, but, when it occurs, it has not always been undertaken in line with training and guidance to reduce the risk of injury.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last inspection, some children have moved into, and others from, the home. Following successful moves, there are now 7 children, who are all a similar age, living together. All children are making good progress in terms of their education, relationships and social skills. Staff know and understand each of the children well. Staff speak about children with care and warmth and are committed to achieving positive outcomes for them.

Children's progress with education is considerable. All attend the on-site school every day, and there is consistent communication between staff and teachers. This helps to ensure that there are clear routines and structures in place, helping children to remain invested in their education.

Staff understand the home's model of care and how to support children. One education professional said that staff respond to children with 'energy and positivity'. As a result of positive relationships and consistency of support, children say that they feel listened to, happy and safe.

The health needs of children are well understood by staff, and children are supported to attend health appointments as needed. There is effective communication with health professionals, and appropriate training is provided to staff when the children have acute or specific health challenges.

Staff encourage and help children to keep in contact with their families and for some children to keep in touch with previous foster carers. This helps children to feel valued, reduces the trauma of being separated from family and improves their emotional wellbeing, confidence and security. However, family time plans are not always in place or well understood. Leaders and managers do not effectively challenge the local authority

when children's plans do not outline the arrangements for them to stay in contact with family members.

Staff support children well when they leave the home. This helps children to settle into their new environment and for trusting relationships to develop in their new home. Some children remain in contact and will return to visit after they have moved on, demonstrating the importance of the relationships they build with staff. One child who has moved on from the home reflected that staff 'never stopped being there for me no matter what, and for that I am truly thankful'.

Staff seek the views of children on a regular basis. They are consulted on meals, activities, how the home is decorated and any changes they would like to make. Children are encouraged to actively participate in meetings to gather their views, and this is made fun for them. There is good management oversight of children's views, with actions being allocated to staff to when children make specific requests. As a result, children feel valued and listened to.

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

Children do not frequently go missing from home. There are clear missing-from-home protocols with multi-agency risk assessments and plans in place. Staff are confident to advocate for children and to challenge partner agencies when they have concerns around the management of risk. This ensures that there are effective responses to keep children safe. When risks escalate to a point where staff are unable to manage them safely, managers work with partner agencies to identify appropriate homes where children can be kept safe.

Staff and children benefit from the support of an in-house clinical team. This helps increase staff's understanding of children's individual needs and behaviour. The clinical team also contributes to a joined-up approach between the home and education, which creates opportunities to consider different approaches to support the children. This improves the quality of care children receive and ensures a consistent approach to meeting their needs.

There are detailed behaviour support plans in place that help staff to consistently respond to the children's behavioural needs. Restraint is not used excessively. When it is necessary, there is good oversight from the manager, the views of children are sought, and information is shared with wider professionals. However, on one occasion, a restraint technique was initiated inappropriately with the potential to cause harm to the child.

Key-work sessions completed with the children are recorded in a child-friendly way. Staff demonstrate curiosity and explore children's behaviours with sensitivity and positivity. This encourages children to feel comfortable and allows them to share their feelings.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers are invested in the children and committed to ensuring that children have the best possible experiences while living at the home. The deputy manager and the staff team are also dedicated to ensuring that children receive high-quality care. There is an established staff team with minimal turnover. This has a positive effect on relationships in the home and helps staff to understand the children and their needs.

Managers and staff build consistently positive relationships with professionals and children's families. Professionals say that there is good communication with staff and that the care provided has led to significant improvements in the behaviours of some children. Families also report good progress and have confidence that children feel safe and are listened to. Staff are described as kind and compassionate.

Team meetings are child focused and provide staff with a forum to discuss specific issues, as well as opportunities to learn from practice. Staff are encouraged to do their own research about the needs of the children, which is then shared with the clinical team. This helps staff to further understand the needs of the children and how to make continuous improvements to care.

The home is decorated to a high standard, and children have the benefit of several personal spaces they can use for their own purposes. It has a homely feel, and there are good facilities in the grounds for the children to use. However, some areas of the home are not accessible to children, as they are used as storage areas for staff.

Supervision sessions are completed regularly with staff. This provides staff with the opportunity to discuss the needs of the children using a reflective approach. However, therapeutic language is not always consistent within recordings, and there are occasions when the use of language is stigmatising for children. This has the potential for children to be left feeling blamed for their behaviour.

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
Restraint in relation to a child is only permitted for the purpose of preventing— injury to any person (including the child); or serious damage to the property of any person (including the child). Restraint in relation to a child must be necessary and proportionate. (Regulation 20 (1)(a)(b)(2))	15 June 2026

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Staff should record information on individual children in a non-stigmatising way that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. Information about the child must always be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations in the quality standards, page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person should ensure that, as in a family home, children should be able to access all shared areas of their home unless there are specific reasons why this would not meet a child's needs. The registered person should ensure that all areas of the home are used for their intended purpose and are free from inappropriate storage, specifically the personal belongings of staff, which prevent spaces from being used effectively by children. (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations in the quality standards, page 15, paragraph 3.10)
- The registered person should ensure that the arrangements for children to see their families must be included in the placement plan agreed between the registered person and the child's placing authority and updated regularly. (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations in the quality standards, page 58, paragraph 11.15)

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: Jill Firth

Registered manager: Michelle Hird

Inspectors

Shaun Martin, Social Care Inspector
Sarah Adotey, Social Care Inspector

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