

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 privately owned and registered to provide care and accommodation for up to seven children and young people who have emotional and/or behavioural problems. In the same grounds there is another children's home and a school, both of which are separately registered and owned by the same provider. All the young people living at this home attend the on-site school.

There is a manager in post who was registered with Ofsted in March 2018.

Inspection dates: 14 to 15 January 2020

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 12 March 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/03/2019	Full	Good
27/11/2018	Full	Inadequate
17/07/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
04/04/2017	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, 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— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) and (2)(h)) In particular: ■ ensure that children's ethnicity and cultural background is obtained from the placing authorities and is accurately recorded in the care plans. ■ ensure that the records pertaining to all staff's current and future training needs are up to date. ■ ensure that all staff read and understand the home's statement of purpose. ■ review the risk management documents to provide clear instructions about how children who present with self-harming behaviours will be safely monitored. ■ monitor key-work sessions to ensure that any identified work with children has been followed up promptly. ■ ensure that supervision records are consistently signed by the supervisor and supervisee.	29/02/2020
Keep the statement of purpose under review and, where appropriate, revise it; and notify HMCI of any revisions and send	29/02/2020

HMCI a copy of the revised statement within 28 days of the revision. (Regulation 16 (3)(a)(b))	
In particular, include details about the practice of locks on the doors of communal rooms in the home.	
The registered person must ensure that— children can access all appropriate areas of the children's home's premises; and any limitation placed on a child's privacy or access to any area of the home's premises— is kept under review and, if necessary, revised. (Regulation 21 (b)(c)(iii)) Specifically, clarify/record the purpose of the locks on doors and identify if/when they are used to manage children's behaviour.	29/02/2020

Recommendations

- When a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)

In particular, sufficient records of the detail of return home interviews should be kept in the home to be able to take account of this information.

- It is for the registered person to judge whether the incident is sufficiently serious to make formal notifications and, if it is, which other relevant persons may be notified, for example, the police, probation service, health professionals, the local authority for the area the home is located in (if this is not the child's placing authority) and others involved with the care or protection of the child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 63, paragraph 14.12)

In particular, provide a written audit trail of the decision-making for not formally notifying Ofsted about specific incidents that are escalated internally.

- The registered person should oversee the welfare of the children in their care through observation and engagement with: each child; the home's staff; each child's family/carers where appropriate; and professionals involved in the care or protection of each child including their social worker, Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), teachers, clinicians and other health professionals etc. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.23)

In particular, the Regulation 45 review of the quality of care provided for children must provide for ascertaining and considering the opinions of the staff.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The children receive a warm and friendly welcome when they move into this homely environment. Their personalised rooms reflect their individuality and choices. One child has left the home since the last inspection. New children have developed positive relationships with the staff and the other children, which helps them to settle. Information from placing authorities informs the children's current care plans, but not all children's ethnicity has been clarified with the relevant placing authority several months on. This does not provide the staff team with the accurate information to promote the children's identity and cultural needs.

The staff role model good parenting and they approach the children with care, affection and patience. This is helping the children to enjoy varied and interesting experiences and to realise their full potential in line with their level of understanding. Children say that they feel included in their plans and feel listened to. Consequently, all of the children are making good progress and they are thriving. Key-work sessions help the children to reflect on their negative and risky behaviours and have resulted in some positive outcomes. However, not all of the action points identified during key-work sessions have been consistently progressed to ensure that the issues are being addressed with the children.

The importance of education and the home's expectations about children attending school are embedded fully into the children's daily routine. This results in the children's high attendance in school, which provides opportunities for them to improve their life chances. Good communication between the home and school supports the children's learning. Weekend jobs, that some older children have sourced, give them a sense of responsibility and promote their independence.

The children's physical and emotional health needs are attended to effectively. The children's engagement in their health and therapeutic plans, including regular support from the in-house clinical team, is helping them to explore their feelings. The interface between the home and clinical team facilitates any further learning needed by the staff team. This helps the staff team to continue to meet the children's diverse needs.

The children's engagement in an impressive range of activities provides regular fun and exciting opportunities that build their confidence and social inclusion, for example trips to different parts of the county, engaging in sporting activities and attendance at clubs. The children celebrate cultural events and enjoy a diverse range of hobbies in the home. Their activities have been enhanced significantly following their attendance at a local authority's board meeting that was offering children's homes funding for activities. One child carried out a presentation to the meeting. Each child was awarded a substantial amount of money, which has enabled them to enjoy their summer holidays to the full. Family time is facilitated by the staff, which helps the children to keep in touch with the important people in their lives.

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

The staff team promotes the children's safety and welfare. This is echoed by the children spoken to who rate their safety highly. They have trusted adults to turn to should they feel unsafe and need someone to talk to. Detailed impact risk assessments identify the risks and support good matching for the new children moving into the home. This also ensures that they are matched carefully with the existing group of children. The risk assessments promote a shared understanding of the children's individual risks and the strategies to reduce them. However, not all risk assessments provide clear direction for staff carrying out regular night-time checks on children who may self-harm. Individual work with the children around their behaviours helps them to understand the risks and learn self-protection strategies. This is leading to positive change for children from their starting points.

The reduction in missing from care incidents is keeping the children increasingly safer. On the occasions when children have gone missing, the staff have followed the missing from home protocol to ensure their safe return. The return home interviews provide opportunities for children to talk to an independent person outside of the home about the reason for going missing. The registered manager has sought feedback following return home interviews to rule out any safeguarding concerns. This does not extend to her obtaining information about the other influences, such as the subtle push and pull factors, that may cause the children to go missing. This recommendation is repeated.

No children are currently deemed to be the subject of exploitation. The proactive steps in place assess the risk of child sexual exploitation and the potential situations where the risk may increase. Staff collaborate with the police and other agencies, including the in-house clinicians, to educate and challenge the opinions of those children who express extreme and inappropriate views. This minimises the likelihood of children being criminalised now and in the future.

The children benefit from clear boundaries that promote their sense of safety and well-being. Physical interventions have reduced significantly. The restraint records include the antecedents leading up to the intervention, which meets the recommendation raised at the last inspection. The registered manager continues to monitor safeguarding concerns and incidents, involving partner agencies and the designated officer as appropriate.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

A suitably experienced and dedicated registered manager runs the children's home. Her approach is child-focused and she has high ambitions for the children to succeed and aspire. She is supported by the deputy manager and the diverse, skilled and upbeat staff team members who know the children well. This team culture is one of working together to promote high standards of care and a protective environment for the children to thrive.

Some staff have left the home since the last inspection. New staff have been appointed subject to safe recruitment checks, induction and probation period, which ensure that

children are not cared for by unsuitable people. The changes in the staff team have not had a detrimental effect on the stability of the home or on the children's progress and experiences. Performance issues and allegations against staff are addressed appropriately.

The home offers a supportive and nurturing environment for the staff team to flourish. The staff team members confirm feeling very supported and receive relevant training to care for the children effectively. However, the training documentation is out of date and does not provide a full overview of the actual and future training needs of the staff. Not all supervision records are signed by the supervisor and supervisee, which makes it unclear if both parties agree on the contents.

The registered manager's use of the existing monitoring system supports her to prioritise and learn from practice shortfalls. Her Regulation 45 review report monitors the care practice in the home and the report demonstrates consultation with children and stakeholders. It does not consider the views of the staff, which makes it unclear how they influence continuous improvement. The independent visits carried out provide additional oversight from a 'critical friend'. The registered manager acts on the feedback, which supports the home's capacity to improve.

Positive feedback from professionals indicates that they are satisfied with the care, support and protection provided to the children. The home's statement of purpose has been updated to ensure that it remains current. Nevertheless, not all of the staff understand this key document, which makes it unclear how they understand the aims and objectives of the home and what it sets out to do for the children. The rationale for having locks on the internal doors is not made explicit in the statement of purpose. No review of the use of the locks on doors has been carried out, which could lead to institutionalised practice if this is not addressed.

Notifications to Ofsted are submitted appropriately. The decision-making around not notifying Ofsted about certain incidents is not routinely recorded to ensure a robust management audit trail.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: Witherslack Group, Lupton Tower, Lupton, Carnforth
LA6 2PR

Responsible individual: Howard Tennant

Registered manager: Michelle Hird

Inspectors

Jacqueline Malcolm: social care inspector

Matthew Reed: HMI

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