

# 1254258

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

This privately operated children's home is registered to provide care for up to four children with social and emotional difficulties. Children placed at this home can access the organisation's registered school and therapeutic services.

The home registered with Ofsted in May 2017 and the manager registered in February 2023.

There were four children living at the home at the time of this inspection.

### Inspection dates: 20 and 21 June 2024

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

|                                                             |             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| How well children and young people are helped and protected | outstanding |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|

|                                           |             |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------|
| The effectiveness of leaders and managers | outstanding |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------|

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection, and care.

**Date of last inspection:** 5 September 2023

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 05/09/2023      | Full            | Outstanding          |
| 28/02/2023      | Full            | Good                 |
| 15/03/2022      | Full            | Good                 |
| 27/01/2020      | Full            | Outstanding          |

## Inspection judgements

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

Children benefit from living in a caring and nurturing home. Children make excellent progress due to the consistently high standards of care provided by a highly skilled and committed team. Children say that living in the home has changed their lives for the better. One child said, 'I have been here a long time but want to stay forever.'

The home environment is decorated nicely and has a relaxed atmosphere. Children are supported to decorate their bedrooms to reflect their own interests and identities. This supports children to have a sense of belonging.

Children are making significant progress in their education from their starting points. Children who have previously not engaged in education are now proud of the targets they are achieving. This means that children's educational predictions for the future have considerably improved. The manager remains persistent in their attempt to engage one child in education. However, there is a lack of structure to the day when the child is not in school. One social worker said, 'Staff work incredibly hard to try and get [name of child] into school and work really well with school.'

Children are encouraged to pursue their hobbies and interests, and they attend a variety of different activities in the local community, including sea cadets, youth groups, playing football, shopping, and swimming. Staff are not risk-averse, and risk assessments are completed to support the children to spend time away from the home. This further enhances children's experiences and develops their independence skills.

All children's healthcare needs are detailed in their plans. The children are in good health and staff actively encourage and support children to attend health appointments. However, despite the efforts to encourage one child to attend routine appointments, one child continues to refuse to attend these. Additionally, one child's health plan is out of date. The manager and staff continue to work with professionals to ensure the health plan is completed and up to date.

To support the children's health, healthcare plans fit together with key-work sessions to assist children in making informed decisions and choices in their lives. Important topics such as education, emotional well-being, attending medical appointments and health are examples of some of the excellent work that is carried out with children during key-work sessions.

The managers and staff encourage the children to spend time with people who are important to them. Staff work closely with children's families.

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

Children are happy and safe in the home and enjoy spending time with the manager and staff. Children are protected by a highly trained, knowledgeable, and competent staff team. Staff implement clear boundaries, routine and structure that create a space for the children to feel emotionally safe.

Relationships between staff and children are positive and are built on trust and affection. They provide a solid base for children to thrive. Due to the nature of the relationships, staff are able to support children to manage their emotions and feelings effectively, including those that may result in conflict.

Children have individual risk assessments that are consistently reviewed and updated by managers and staff. Staff have a comprehensive knowledge of children's risks and vulnerabilities and take time to talk to children and educate them about risk.

The manager and staff appropriately balance the need for protection with enabling children to take reasonable risks as part of their growth and development. As a result, children are becoming more independent and enjoy time in the community.

There are very few missing from home incidents. Staff are proactive when children go missing. Managers and staff search for children in a thorough way and liaise effectively with relevant professionals to ensure that children are supported to return home safely. There are robust missing from home protocols in place which are fully understood and followed by staff.

Positive recognition and praise outweigh negative consequences. The manager evaluates consequences, ensuring that consequences are proportionate and restorative.

It has been necessary for staff to physically intervene when children have displayed behaviours that may result in harm to themselves or others. Records of these incidents are robust and demonstrate that holds are proportionate and appropriate. Detailed debriefs are completed, and this helps to prevent future incidents and ensure children's well-being.

The recruitment of staff is comprehensive and ensures that all necessary background checks have been conducted. This means that the adults caring for the children are safe to do so.

## **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

The home is managed by a dedicated, caring, and ambitious manager who advocates very well for the children. The manager has completed a leadership and management qualification. The manager ensures that he is present in the home and accessible to staff and children. The manager speaks about the children with warmth and enthusiasm.

The management and staff team are committed to achieving the best outcomes for the children and ensuring that they receive a high level of care that meets their individual needs. The manager recognises the importance of the staff's need to feel valued, trusted and listened to.

Children's records are well organised and detailed. The records show children's achievements and experiences. This information demonstrates the significant and continued progress that children make living at this home. Children are involved in all aspects of the running of their home. The children's records capture their views consistently, and their voice comes to life.

New staff members feel welcomed into the team and benefit from a robust induction programme. Staff receive ongoing support, supervision and constant guidance from leaders and managers. One member of staff said, 'Supervisions are not generic they are reflective and make me think.'

Staff team meetings and child focused meetings are effective and have direct links to research to help support and guide practice. They focus on children's well-being and progress and enable staff to be reflective. However there has been a period with limited staff meetings.

The manager and staff work closely with the home's in-house therapist to ensure the best therapeutic support for the children. A member of staff said, 'The therapist comes regularly and spends time in the home to talk to and support us and the children.'

Managers and staff complete a range of training that focuses on meeting children's individual needs. Staff apply their learning effectively in their day-to-day work with children. The home has a lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender champion to support and provide learning opportunities for staff and children.

There is good multi-agency working. The manager and staff maintain excellent levels of communication with other professionals. One social worker said, 'Communication is brilliant. I get amazing weekly updates that are balanced.'

The manager has a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the home. The manager has close oversight of children's progress and any changes needed. Internal and external monitoring of the home are effective.

The management team, staff and children can clearly demonstrate the positive impact that living in the home has had on enhancing the children's lives. A social worker said, '[Name of child] has made progress, there is a dramatic difference.'

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

### **Recommendations**

- The registered person should ensure that staff support children to engage in suitable structured activities when they are not in school. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.15)
- The registered person should ensure that staff encourage children to take a proactive role in looking after their day-to-day health and well-being, in particular around attending medical appointments and medical reviews. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 34, paragraph 7.10)
- The registered person is responsible for leading a team which provides high quality care for all children living in the home, in particular ensuring regular staff meetings take place to support staff to deliver the ethos, outcomes, and approach of the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.4)

### **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:** 1254258

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

**Registered provider:** Witherslack Group Limited

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

**Responsible individual:** Mark Jarvill

**Registered manager:** John O'Boyle

## Inspector

Stacey Ilaboya, Social Care Inspector

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