

1259631

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 and managed by a private company. It provides care for up to seven children who may have emotional or social difficulties. There were seven children living at the home at the time of the inspection.

The home's registered manager left her role on 30 November 2024. The new manager has applied to register with Ofsted.

There is a school on site. The inspector only inspected the social care provision on this site.

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 December 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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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: 22 August 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/08/2023	Full	Outstanding
25/01/2023	Full	Good
28/02/2022	Full	Good
14/01/2020	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

All children spoke positively about living at the home. One child said, 'The best thing about living here is the staff. They are really supportive, and you get to do loads of fun activities.' Children live in a highly nurturing environment where their needs are prioritised and consistently met. Staff have an excellent understanding of each child's needs and provide high-quality, individualised care. Staff are highly committed to supporting children. As a result, all children make exceptional progress.

The manager develops detailed, child-centred plans when children move in and out of the home. One child who has lived at the home for over four years has been supported to move to a home near their family. The child continues to have contact with staff. This shows the positive relationships that they have established.

Positive relationships develop between the staff and children. Staff are nurturing and show warmth, and there is lots of laughter. Children want to spend time with staff and feel supported. Achievements are celebrated, and there are photos and artwork of the children displayed around the home. One social worker said, 'Staff are warm, attentive and caring. Communication has been brilliant. The manager regularly updates us on the child's progress and any changes.'

The children's health and well-being have significantly improved since living in the home. Staff have an excellent understanding of children's health needs. Staff work in partnership with other professionals to help children understand and manage past traumas that affect their emotional well-being. For one child, their self-harming behaviour has significantly been reduced.

Staff work closely with the education team and therapists who are on site to offer a wraparound service for children. Staff in both the home and school meet each day to ensure that there is consistent support in place. The children's attendance levels at school are excellent. One child had been out of formal education for some time before moving into the home. They are now fully engaging in their education and completing extra-curricular activities such as horse riding.

Children spend time with people who are important to them. Staff are committed to ensuring that family time takes place regularly, no matter the distance. Communication between staff and parents is strong. Staff support families to rebuild relationships with their child, and they start spending good-quality time together.

Children like spending time together and will regularly go out on activities as a group with staff. Recently, they all went on a caravan holiday, and children speak positively about this experience. Staff encourage children to try new individual activities to meet their interests and hobbies. Children regularly attend clubs such as gymnastics, cheerleading, police cadets, fishing, football, rugby, and, more recently for one child, a

DJ club. This is developing children's social skills and building their self-esteem and confidence.

The home environment is well maintained, welcoming and bright. There are age-appropriate toys and games available. There is a lot of communal space, so children can choose to spend time with each other or have some time alone. Children's bedrooms are all personalised and have en-suite facilities. As the home is on the same site as the school, children use all the outdoor play areas in the evenings and weekends. Children's views are taken seriously and are central to the decisions made. As a result, children feel respected, valued and listened to. Children have regular discussions with staff about the incentives that they would like to work on to improve their development of age-appropriate life skills.

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

All children feel safe in the home, and they can identify a trusted adult they would go to if they had any concerns or worries. Children stated that the staff listen to them and act on their concerns. Complaints are addressed by the manager appropriately, with the child being spoken to throughout the process. One parent said, '[Name of child] is safe in the home. I cannot say enough positives about the staff. They are amazing.'

Staff have an excellent understanding of children's risks and vulnerabilities. Children are supported to understand their vulnerabilities and how behaviour can affect others. Through age-appropriate discussions with staff, children are learning to make safer choices.

There have been three incidents of when children did not return home at the agreed time. Staff take steps to locate children and ensure that their safety is paramount. Staff work with other professionals to ensure children's safe return. After each incident, children speak to an independent person, so they can share any worries.

The manager maintains highly effective partnerships with all professional agencies to ensure that children consistently benefit from the best help and support. Significant incidents are professionally managed and are reported to the appropriate authorities to ensure that children are protected from harm.

Positive behaviour is supported by staff through the strong relationships that they have developed with the children. Staff support children to identify the best ways to help them when their emotions are heightened. Staff talk to children after an incident and suggest safer ways to express their frustrations. As a result, incidents have been reduced.

Physical intervention has only been used to keep children safe. Children are supported after a restraint to reflect on their feelings and understand why the hold was necessary. The manager has clear oversight of each incident record, and she reviews potential triggers and identifies additional support and strategies needed to prevent incidents reoccurring.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

There has been a recent change in the management of the home. The experienced deputy manager is now the acting manager after a thorough transition from the previously registered manager. She has an excellent understanding of the children's needs. This has provided consistency for children. The new manager is child-centred, and the children are at the heart of everything she does.

There are strong systems in place to monitor the day-to-day practice in the home and the progress that all the children are making. The review of the quality of care has provided direction for the improvements planned. Senior leaders also support to ensure that staff practice is constantly developing and that improvements are made in the best interests of children.

The manager leads a stable and committed staff team, and many of the staff have been working at the home for several years. They share the same high aspirations for the children, providing them with consistency. Staff are positive about their roles and the support that they receive from the manager and the wider team.

Leaders and managers provide each staff member with excellent support, guidance and encouragement. Staff receive regular, high-quality supervision sessions, which give them the opportunity to reflect and gain support to develop their skills and knowledge.

All staff receive a comprehensive training and induction programme before working at the home, along with ongoing training available once they start. The manager also arranges additional training from the in-house clinical team to support the staff to meet the children's individual needs. Staff said that they value the training as it gives them the skills and knowledge they need to work with vulnerable children.

Staff meetings take place regularly and give staff an opportunity to share knowledge. Children have input in the meetings, as the manager shares their views from the children's monthly meetings. The in-house therapist also attends the staff meetings each month to give advice and support. The manager ensures that there is research-based guidance and discussions in each meeting.

Social workers from the placing authorities are extremely complimentary about the staff and the care they provide to children. One social worker said, 'I cannot praise them [manager and staff team] enough. The child is at the centre of everything they do.'

No requirements or recommendations were given at this inspection.

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: 1259631

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: Post vacant

Inspector

Simon Jones, Social Care Inspector

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