

# 1259631

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

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 and accommodation for up to seven children who may have emotional and/or social difficulties. There were six children living at the home at the time of the inspection.

The manager registered with Ofsted in March 2023. She holds suitable qualifications for this role.

### Inspection dates: 22 and 23 August 2023

|                                                                                           |                    |
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| <b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b> | <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:** 25 January 2023

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

| Inspection date | Inspection type | Inspection judgement   |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| 25/01/2023      | Full            | Good                   |
| 28/02/2022      | Full            | Good                   |
| 14/01/2020      | Full            | Good                   |
| 06/03/2019      | Interim         | Improved effectiveness |

## Inspection judgements

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

Children living in this home are thriving because of the high-quality, wraparound care they receive. All children, despite their complex or challenging needs, are consistently making significant progress from their starting points. The staff, clinical team and school are united in their partnership and commitment to promote children's well-being and aspirations. As a result of this team effort, children's care plans reflect the consistent approach of the care staff, education and therapy practitioners. This consistency is supporting the children to make sustained progress socially, educationally and in respect of their emotional well-being. Parents recognise that their children are achieving well because of the quality of care and education they receive.

Children have trusting relationships with the adults caring for them. Staff receive regular research-based guidance from the clinical team, which supports their trauma-based approach with children. This allows them to be more responsive to children's changing needs. During a short period when children used inappropriate language towards each other, the registered manager ensured that children were supported by wraparound services. For example, a school assembly reinforced acknowledging and respecting different cultures, and a police community support officer completed direct work with the children. This has helped children to understand the implications of their behaviour on others, and consequently, their use of inappropriate language has stopped.

Children live in a welcoming and well-maintained home. They enjoy spending time both in their personalised en-suite bedrooms as well as with other children and staff in communal areas of the home. The registered manager responds to the children's individual needs and has purchased specific types of beds and equipment, such as an air conditioning unit. This helps children to regulate themselves and feel safe in their bedrooms.

Children's photos are displayed throughout the home. Children have lived together in this home for a number of years. They enjoy looking at the photos, which provide positive memories and assurances of how they have physically and emotionally matured over the years.

Children are flourishing because of the range of opportunities and experiences they have. They enjoy spending time together as a group and enjoyed sharing photos from their recent holiday together. Staff promote children's individual skills. Children are members of local sports clubs and are encouraged to pursue their interests, such as horse-riding. This encourages the learning of new skills while also reinforcing healthy lifestyle choices for children.

The registered manager provides a noteworthy level of support to the children's parents. She goes above and beyond to listen to parents and supports them to understand their family circumstances and their children's needs. As a result, parents state that they feel welcomed and listened to and that their relationships with their children are improving.

Children are prepared well when moving into or from the home. The registered manager is a strong advocate for children. This ensures that children's voices are heard and that their transitions are in line with their needs. The registered manager maintains contact with new care staff to ensure that children experience a seamless move. This helps to minimise disruption, and consequently, children settle quickly.

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

The registered manager responds immediately and effectively to reduce actual harm to children. She is also proactive, anticipating risks of potential harm for children. Children's assessments and plans provide staff with comprehensive strategies and guidance to protect children.

One child's social worker reported that the registered manager anticipated a child's potential distress at a meeting and consequently increased staffing levels. The child therefore had additional staff who were able to help him regulate his behaviour. The registered manager's actions reduced the impact of the distress for the child and those living alongside him in the home.

The registered manager disseminates learning from incidents throughout the company. When children have self-injurious behaviours, the registered manager has disseminated the learning to others in the home and within the company.

The registered manager ensures effective information-sharing with the clinical team and works with children to design bespoke packages of therapeutic support. She also advocates for children to receive external specialist support where this is in their best interests.

Children receive high-quality support from staff through key-work sessions. Staff use their relationships to have child-focused, detailed and, at times, difficult conversations with children. Children are developing greater self-awareness and, consequently, are able to talk with staff about their experiences and their emotions.

Staff successfully use de-escalation techniques when children appear unsettled. Staff intervene physically to manage children's behaviour when they place themselves or others at risk. Their interventions are appropriate and proportionate. Children are spoken to afterwards by a staff member who was not involved in the hold. This provides independent oversight. The registered manager uses debriefs to understand children's lived experiences. Staff debriefs are reflective and inform further care planning.

Children are supported to manage their inappropriate behaviour through focused restorative practice. The registered manager encourages restorative practice. Children, therefore, learn how to repair relationships with each other and staff. In addition, the registered manager focuses on children's achievements, which are celebrated as 'wow' moments. 'Wow' certificates are awarded to children to reflect their achievements. Children are proud of the increasing number of 'wow' moments they receive.

Children do not go missing from home. On the rare occasions when a child has left, staff follow the child and encourage them to return home. Staff spoke confidently about children's Philomena Protocols and the home's safeguarding policies. Children receive a return home interview to cover any additional concerns.

Children's voices are heard through the children's meetings and key-work sessions. The registered manager responds to any grumbles. Children therefore feel that they are listened to without the need to make a complaint.

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

The registered manager and her deputy are inspirational leaders who have the highest ambitions for the children living in this home.

The registered manager provides effective oversight of care by stepping in to deliver management decisions, which are sometimes difficult for children to hear. The registered manager leads by example, modelling her staff's interactions with children, which are both clearly focused and nurturing. She does this to ensure that children receive the highest quality of care from staff. As a result, staff provide consistency in their approach to children.

The registered manager has high aspirations for staff. She oversees their performance through regular supervision and performance appraisals. The registered manager praises staff when good practice is seen and challenges tasks that are not completed or practice gaps that are identified. Children contribute to staff development plans. Their feedback is central to reinforcing good practice as well as identifying areas of development for staff.

Staff access an extensive range of training that is delivered centrally and by the clinical team. The deputy manager has also introduced a safeguarding training tool which allows more informal exploration of care issues that may result in staff acting to help and protect children. This innovative and creative concept reinforces the registered manager's vision of staff delivering the highest quality care for children.

Staff feel highly valued by the registered manager. The registered manager is described as a considerate advocate who recognises the needs of individual staff. She acts to ensure that they have the support and adaptations they require to fulfil their roles. The staff team is therefore stable and provides consistency of care to children without the use of agency staff.

The registered manager knows the staff's strengths and weaknesses well. She provides robust and effective management oversight through monitoring and spot checks of records maintained in the home. There is sustained progress in this home, with the registered manager responding promptly to address any shortfalls identified.

The registered manager develops secure partner relationships. Children's social workers, the headteacher and the clinical lead all shared with the inspectors that working relationships are strong and based on regular and effective communication and information-sharing. The registered manager promotes working relationships to ensure that children are getting the best care, experiences and opportunities for the future.

The registered manager helps children to understand the community and world that they live in. She encourages children to recognise their neighbours, who, in feedback, have described the children as polite and friendly. Children also make positive contributions to charity work and world event appeals by fundraising and donating. Children related their experiences talking to the homeless when donating clothes and food parcels. Children subsequently have an increased understanding of belonging and security, as well as appreciating difficulties experienced within society and the world.

## **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 Ltd

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

**Responsible individual:** Tamara Pearcey

**Registered manager:** Jill Firth

## Inspectors

Joanna Warburton, Social Care Inspector  
Louise Walker, Social Care Inspector

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