

1263199

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for six children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is operated by a private provider.

Inspection dates: 19 to 20 March 2018

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: Not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: Not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This children's home is good because:

- This is the first inspection of the home, as it only become operational in December 2018, following registration with Ofsted. The home is developing working practices alongside the creation of its own culture and ethos. Early planning is good and the home is well organised and managed.

- Based on their starting points when first entering the home, young people are making good progress in all areas of their lives.
- Young people benefit from living in a structured environment where boundaries are clearly defined. This helps them to grow in confidence, enjoy improved health, reduce risky or challenging behaviours and remain safe.
- Young people develop strong and trusting relationships with staff who act as good role models and genuinely care about their welfare. A team centred approach adopted by staff, provides young people with a high consistency of care.
- Staff work co-operatively with partner agencies and wherever possible, parents and carers. This reflects the inclusive culture being developed in the home. Young people are encouraged and supported to have a voice, which allows them to influence the day-to-day running of the home.

The children's home's areas for development:

- Working practices should be reviewed to ensure that any broken or damaged furniture, is either repaired quickly or replaced.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
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What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Ensure that the home meets the young people's basic day-to-day needs and provides a welcoming, supportive and homely environment. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.7)
In particular, damaged furniture should be quickly repaired or replaced.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This is the first inspection of the home and it took place three months after registration. Careful planning has allowed young people to be admitted to the home, in a phased manner. The organisation's referral team are undertaking careful scrutiny of potential placements as part of an ongoing matching process. The needs of young people who are referred are assessed, alongside the needs of those already in residence. This has resulted in good levels of compatibility being achieved for the group of young people living in the home.

Good planning, and the development of solid working practices, provide young people with structure, boundaries, support and a feeling of security. As a result, they are settled in their placement and are beginning to thrive and progress in all areas of their lives. A young person told the inspector, 'I like my home. The staff are nice and look after me.'

The progress young people are making is recognised by others. For example, a parent reported, 'The staff have a really good understanding of him and know what makes him tick. He has settled well. He is not disturbed or distressed. He is now more able to accept the consequences of his behaviour.' A social worker commented, 'This is the best I have seen him in the eighteen months I have worked with him.'

Young people's progress, along with their identified needs, is clearly evidenced in the range of planning documents, risk assessments and behaviour management strategies used to manage negative behaviour. Regular review and updates of documents keeps them current. Further evidence of young people's progress is found in both weekly and monthly reports sent to social workers and parents, as well as in the comprehensive reports prepared by staff prior to a young person's review. Collectively, these documents track and evaluate progress of young people as well as identifying areas of continuing need.

The home is meeting with considerable success in re-engaging young people who have recent histories of rejecting school, back into full time education. Currently they are attending two schools also run by this organisation. School attendance by young people

is high, which is reflected in the educational progress that young people are making. This is helped by clear morning routines, which have a clear focus on school days to get young people up and ready for school, in a positive frame of mind.

Staff work supportively with young people and their families where possible, to repair and maintain relationships. A parent spent time describing to the inspector, how broken relationships have been repaired. She described how staff have supported the family to the extent that home visits, heavily supported by staff, are now taking place regularly.

The arrangements to address the health needs of young people are good. Strong links have been developed with community based health services to ensure that young people's day to day health needs are being met. In addition to this, the home has its own mental health practitioner working alongside other staff in the home, giving young people access to regular counselling and support. Other specialist services are accessed and brought in where necessary. Detailed health plans form part of each young person's placement plan. The arrangements around the storage, administration and recoding of medication are good.

Promotion of healthy lifestyles is an area that continue to be developed. For example, young people are being encouraged to eat more healthily. Staff encourage fitness and exercise when weekly activity plans are discussed with young people. Young people participate in a wide range of community based activities, many of which promote and increase the fitness levels of young people. Good staffing levels and access to transport allows for individual needs to be met. For example, a young person spoke about how they enjoyed swimming, cycling and trampolining.

Young people and staff have good relationships, which enhance the high levels of communication and consultation taking place at the home. Young people meet with staff on a weekly basis to discuss issues and make choices for the week. However, consultation is an ongoing daily theme, as staff and young people mix and chat happily together.

The home is a large detached house that is indistinguishable as a children's home within the modern housing estate that it is located in. It is spacious and overall, has a high standard of fixtures, fittings décor, furnishings and equipment. Bedrooms are single occupancy with their own bathroom. Young people's bedrooms are personalised to reflect their individual interests. Young people were observed as being comfortable and at ease, throughout the visit they mixed well with staff and each other, creating a calm, happy and relaxed atmosphere.

However, there was damage to the furniture in one bedroom that could have been addressed sooner. Although the manager rectified this matter during the inspection, a discussion took place regarding the monitoring of bedrooms and staff's responses to broken items. Agreement was reached that staff could have acted more promptly on this occasion.

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

The systems in place to keep young people safe are good. For example, there are risk assessments that identify risks in and around the home, as well as the wider community. Service contracts to maintain and service safety equipment are also in place. Visitor's credentials are checked on arrival, adding to a sense of security.

The safeguarding procedures adopted and implemented to keep young people safe are good. Strong, professional relationships with external agencies in order to keep young people safe have been developed. For example, a professional who spoke to the inspector said that staff, 'are open, honest and transparent.' The relationships and working practices that have been developed between the home and professionals ensure that there is a multi-agency response, should a safeguarding issues arise. All staff have received appropriate training and demonstrate familiarity with safeguarding procedures, along with a recognition of their own responsibilities to keep young people safe.

The home accommodates young people with complex issues who have a history of challenging, disruptive and at times, aggressive behaviour. The challenges that they can pose can test the skills and resources of staff. It is to their credit and a reflection of the continuity of care developed, that any challenges posed, are dealt with quickly and efficiently before they become serious, behavioural issues. A confident, staff team have the skills to manage the challenges posed in a supportive and caring manner. As a result, young people benefit from living in a non-punitive environment.

Behavioural incidents, including those requiring physical intervention are being managed effectively. Records are detailed and thorough. Senior staff monitor and evaluate incidents, looking for indicators, trends or patterns. This helps to improve practice and aid consistency. Local protocols, along with the homes own procedures are in place should a young person go missing. It is pleasing to report that there have been no such incidents since the home became operational.

Although there have been some incidents of bullying, these incidents have decreased significantly as the young people settle into their new home and routines. It is not an area of current concern for young people, although staff remain vigilant and step in at the first sign of any potential conflict. Good staffing levels mean opportunities for bullying are limited.

The recruitment and vetting procedures for new staff are thorough and meet with regulatory requirement and current guidance. Procedures are in place for longer serving staff to be re-checked regularly. This is recognised good practice and ensures that young people are only being looked after by staff who have been suitably cleared and recruited.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager in post when the home was first registered left before it became

operational. The current manager was quickly recruited, which explains why the registration process with Ofsted remains ongoing. However, the process is well advanced and completion of the registration is imminent. The current manager has around twelve years' experience as a registered manager of children's homes and has the appropriate qualifications.

Planning prior to the home becoming operational was good, allowing for planned admissions of young people into the home. It is pleasing that the manager and external management team have allowed time and space for young people to settle into their placement, before new admissions have been accepted. This has allowed the staff to develop working practices that are meeting the complex needs of young people.

The manager has a clear vision about how she wants the home to operate. She is being well supported by a staff team who are helping to develop the ethos and culture of the home. The workforce and development plan for the home clearly outlines appropriate areas for development and how it should operate in terms of meeting the quality standards.

The majority of the staff team were in place before the home admitted young people. They participated in a well-structured training programme, designed to provide them with the necessary skills. The team has a balance of experienced and professionally qualified staff, mixed with staff bringing in fresh skills and ideas to the home. Staff supervision has taken place consistently. This has given staff reassurance and confidence to work collectively together in meeting the needs of young people.

Both the internal and external monitoring of the home is taking place regularly, providing support to the management and staff team. Evaluation of working practices and staff performance is ongoing, contributing effectively to the homes operation. Critical analysis highlights areas of strength and weakness. This in turn transfers into the homes own development and workforce plan, which identifies areas for future development.

The needs of young people as individuals and as part of a group are well-matched. A child-centred manager with a clear vision of how she sees the home progressing, is being well supported by external management. Staff are well organised and managed. Young people have settled well into their placements and are benefitting from a consistency of care, provided in a homely environment. As a result, they are adopting more socially acceptable and safer lifestyles, which will help them to achieve positive outcomes in their future.

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: 1263199

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Marcella Bird

Registered manager: Post Vacant

Inspector

Graham Robinson, social care inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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