

2496627

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a private company. It provides care for up to four children with social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in August 2019.

At the time of this inspection, four children were living in the home. The inspector observed all four of the children and spoke alone with two of the children.

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 December 2023

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: 22 February 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/02/2023	Full	Good
01/02/2022	Full	Good
12/12/2019	Interim	Improved effectiveness
30/04/2019	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children like living in the home and they are making progress. The home has experienced change in recent months with some children leaving after living in the home for several years. Those children also made progress and benefited from living in the home.

The manager and staff provide the children with a nurturing environment. They tell the children that they are committed to them and give children positive messages that the children are loved and valued. This helps children to feel more secure, particularly when they fear rejection.

The children adore the manager. One child said, 'She's always there for us.' Another child said, 'She's lovely, she'll do anything to help. She makes the house feel like a home. If you walk in here, that is what a home feels like.'

Children benefit from good school attendance, and they make progress from their starting points. Staff help children to close some of the gaps in their learning. Children have aspirations for the future, for example gaining qualifications and employment. Staff encourage children to read, and children have their preferred books on shelves in their bedrooms.

Additionally, children are encouraged to play. Younger children have toys and games aimed at their age and stage of development. The home is spacious, allowing children to have time individually with staff and as a group. The staff tailor the day to meet the children's varied needs and age differences. While this can be a challenge, the staff do this well.

Children's views are respected and used to influence their care. The staff encourage the children to have open conversations, to talk about group living and any matters affecting them. In the home's regular meetings, children talk about their plans and make requests. Staff encourage children to show appreciation for others and raise any issues. The manager has oversight of all these meetings, ensuring that she responds to the children's requests.

Staff support children to spend time with their family and to join in family celebrations, including when this is some distance away. When children miss their family or they are concerned about loved ones, the staff provide children with emotional support and liaise with relevant professionals to provide the child with information and reassurance. Children are also supported to reconnect with people who they have not seen for some time. This helps promote children's emotional well-being.

Staff promote and celebrate children's uniqueness. Children develop their sense of self, make age-appropriate choices and learn about their family background. Photos

of children's family members and hometowns are on display in the home. This helps children to maintain their identity and feel proud of where they have come from.

Children's family members and professionals who know them well speak highly of the quality of care provided. Communication is good and increased during significant events, to ensure that all relevant people know the children's progress and are involved in decision-making. One parent said, 'We see it as [Name of child's] second family. They always make us feel welcome.'

Children are well supported when they leave the home, which helps them to have a positive ending. Prior to their move, the manager engages with relevant agencies to help identify the right home for the child and supports the move in a planned way. The manager shares important information with the child's next home, which helps the new carers prepare for the child. Staff support children emotionally at this time, with lots of conversations to check how the child is feeling. Some children remain in contact after they leave and receive a warm response from the staff.

However, planning for children to move into the home is not adapted enough for younger children. For one child, the children's guide, introduction to the home and the staff preparation were not personalised and did not consider the child's age or understanding. In addition, written information about the child was not accurate and did not fully reflect their current needs. The lack of good preparation meant that staff did not have clear plans to follow and key observations of the child were not completed in accordance with professional advice. Other children living in the home were given little notice and information.

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

Risks to most children have reduced. Staff use their experience of caring for children to review strategies and approaches so that they work best for children. When risks do not reduce, the staff liaise with relevant professionals, such as the child's social worker, therapist and school. Together, they agree new strategies to help the child to be safer.

It is extremely rare for children to go missing from the home, with only one incident since the last inspection. This is because the staff help the children to understand the dangers and identify ways for children to express their feelings without leaving the home.

Staff encourage children to develop positive relationships with each other. High levels of staff supervision mean that disagreements between the children are quickly addressed. The staff confidently talk with children about being tolerant of others and the effects of unkind behaviour. Staff use incentives to help children repair relationships and make amends. When these are not effective, alternative approaches are used. This supports children to live well together.

Holds are used by staff to protect the children and others. The number of holds has risen since the last inspection, but this has started to reduce again. Staff seek expert

advice on the use of holds and reflect together on the ways to avoid restrictive measures and support the children differently. The manager reviews records to check that holds are proportionate and necessary. However, in one example, the quality of scrutiny was poor and did not identify that the staff used a hold that was not in the child's plan.

Allegations against staff are reported to relevant managers and professionals. The manager takes a lead on investigations and immediately carries out a risk assessment to protect the child and others. However, in one example, an independent person or medical professional did not see the child. The manager did not persist with this or challenge the placing authority. This led to delays in the child being seen and potentially a missed opportunity to gather evidence.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is committed to the home and the children living there. She is nurturing and leads the team in this approach. She is a confident leader who is well supported by her deputy and senior leaders in the organisation. She continues to develop the running of the home and takes advantage of external scrutiny and audits to identify areas for improvement. She promotes learning and development in the home for herself and the staff.

The staff team is stable with few staff leaving since the last inspection. The manager considers the children's needs when planning the staff rota. The skill and personality mix of the staff means that the children receive care from different role models with different life experiences. This enhances children's care and their understanding of diversity.

The staff work well together as a team and say that they feel well supported to carry out their role. Staff receive regular supervision where they discuss their well-being, relationships and observations of the the children. Written records of supervision are, however, brief and do not show how staff are progressing children's plans, particularly when the staff member is a key worker for a child and has additional responsibilities.

The quality of management oversight and scrutiny of children's records, in particular daily records, is not thorough. Some records were not easy to locate or were not held on the child's file. In addition, a child's placing authority plan was out of date. The children's register also had information missing. The gaps identified were brought to the manager's attention during the inspection.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person must take to meet The Care Standards Act 2000, The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'. The registered person must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that staff— provide personalised care that meets each child's needs, as recorded in the child's relevant plans, taking account of the child's background; make decisions about the day-to-day arrangements for each child, in accordance with the child's relevant plans, which give the child an appropriate degree of freedom and choice. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(b)(iv)(ix)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that children moving into the home have clear care plans for staff to follow, and that those plans are personalised in accordance with the child's age and needs.	19 February 2024
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—	19 February 2024

use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that all documents and records of children’s daily experiences are scrutinised, and that action is taken if shortfalls are identified.	
The registered person must maintain records (“case records”) for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)) In particular, this refers to the register of children, including the statutory provision (if any) under which the child is accommodated.	19 February 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that where the placing authority or another relevant person does not provide the input and services needed to meet a child’s needs during their time in the home or in preparation for leaving the home, the home challenges them to meet the child’s needs (see regulations 5(c)). (‘Guide to the Children’s Homes Regulations, including the quality standards’ page, 12, paragraph 2.8)

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: 2496627

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: Danielle Cunningham

Inspector

Catherine Heron, His Majesty's Inspector

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