

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 provider. It provides care for up to four children who experience social and emotional difficulties. Children who live in this home also attend the provider's independent school.

The manager registered with Ofsted in August 2019.

There were four children living at the home at the time of the inspection. The inspector observed three of the children and spoke alone to two of them during the inspection.

Inspection dates: 30 and 31 July 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: 18 December 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
18/12/2023	Full	Good
22/02/2023	Full	Good
01/02/2022	Full	Good
12/12/2019	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children significantly benefit from living in the home because they make continuous progress that enhances their lives and improves their outcomes.

Children usually live in the home for several years. This stability means that children are happier, more settled and have a stronger sense of belonging. They also develop ambitions and look forward to their future. One professional said, 'Previously, [name of child] could not stick at anything because they were constantly moving. Living in this home for so long has made a huge difference to [name of child].'

Children have wonderful relationships with the staff and enjoy spending time with them. Staff know children exceptionally well, and their interactions with them are warm and caring. Children are seen laughing, playing games, telling staff their worries and throwing their arms around them for a hug. Staff make time for each child individually and as a group, creating a positive family atmosphere.

Children make excellent educational progress and achieve positive outcomes. Their attendance is very good, and they look forward to their school day. Staff encourage children to be ambitious and value learning. They provide children with opportunities outside of school to help them achieve academic targets. The strong and effective home-to-education partnership results in excellent communication between carers and school staff, which means that the children thrive in both settings.

Children live a healthy lifestyle. The staff are alert to signs that children are unwell and are proactive in ensuring that children promptly access health services. Staff help children to follow necessary medical advice and treatment, which includes dental care. For some children, this has significantly improved their health. Using research, and in consultation with the children, the manager has revised food menus, introducing healthier alternatives that have a positive impact on children's well-being, such as their mood.

Children's memory books are beautifully created, with an array of photos of the child's experiences in the home. Because the children usually stay for several years, the books reflect the child's growth and their remarkable achievements and are a treasured keepsake for the children in the future.

The spacious home is maintained to a high standard. Children influence the home's furnishing and decoration, for example, their bedrooms are designed to reflect the child's likes and individuality. The large gardens provide children with additional space and freedom to play, in addition to various walking routes that the children enjoy. This means children like their home and feel comfortable.

Children are fully supported to maintain important relationships and feel well connected to their family network. The staff coordinate children's family time well so that children have fun and get the most out of seeing their loved ones. Parents say that the staff's approach makes visits, which need to be supervised, feel less intrusive, which puts everyone at ease. Staff sensitively support children when family time cannot take place or when family relationships are strained. Written records of sessions are routinely completed but are not always thorough. This makes them less informative, should children wish to read them in the future.

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

The high-quality professional practice in this home has resulted in a sustained reduction in all risks for all the children. This has made a significant difference to their lives, and as a result, they are safer.

Children receive therapeutic intervention that targets the impact of past trauma. Children engage well with the home's therapist, who provides them with individual one-to-one sessions, often involving play. Consequently, children recognise a greater range of feelings and emotions and, where necessary, develop helpful strategies to cope with them. The staff follow the therapist's advice and eagerly seek additional guidance when necessary.

Behavioural incidents in the home are well managed and have continued to reduce in duration and severity. The staff understand why incidents occur and respond to the children using appropriate distraction and de-escalation techniques. This has led to fewer children being held by staff.

The children live together in harmony as part of a big family. The staff model good relationships so that the children learn to compromise and see things from other people's points of view. Consequently, children develop greater tolerance, respect and empathy for others. This results in the children valuing each other's uniqueness and engaging more positively together, with some having close friendships.

Staff deliver creative direct-work sessions covering a range of topics that promote children's self-care skills. When older children are ready, they commence an independence programme that improves their knowledge on various matters, such as managing finances, rights and entitlements and maintaining a home. This helps children to be better prepared for leaving care.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager and deputy have worked as an effective partnership for several years. The longevity of their leadership and ambitious attitude have shaped the home's development, taking it from strength to strength to achieve the highest standard of care for the children. Complemented by the stability and skill of the staff team, the home is a nurturing environment where children flourish.

The manager leads by example, applying her own learning and research to improve children's experiences. Her dedication and determination to raise standards have motivated staff to be the best carers that they can be. Therefore, they embrace opportunities to improve. This has resulted in practice changes and developments, some of which have influenced policy change in the wider organisation.

Management oversight of children's care is comprehensive and provides effective scrutiny of practice. The newly appointed responsible individual provides additional oversight by regularly visiting the home and reviewing the children's care. This has helped to ensure that shortfalls are promptly identified and addressed.

The staff are incredibly proud of their work and the difference this makes to children. They speak highly of the support that they receive from each other and their approachable leaders. Staff team meetings and supervision are reflective. They are balanced with a focus on staff well-being and development, alongside discussing the children's needs and ways to boost their progress. Staff receive additional support and bespoke training when needed. This results in staff feeling valued and well supported in their role.

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

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that there is a detailed record of all forms of children's family time, including telephone contact and unsupervised visits. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 58, paragraph 11.18)

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: Tracy Nicholson

Registered manager: Danielle Cunningham

Inspector

Catherine Heron, His Majesty's Inspector

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