

2509300

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 by a private company. It provides care for up to 7 children who may experience emotional or social difficulties.

At the time of this inspection, 5 children were living in the home. The inspector spoke with 3 children as part of the inspection.

A suitably qualified and experienced manager is in post.

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 February 2026

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	requires improvement to be 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: 4 February 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
04/02/2025	Full	Outstanding
01/08/2023	Full	Good
12/04/2022	Full	Good
11/01/2022	Interim	Declined in effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last inspection, one child has moved into the home and 3 children have moved out. Leaders and managers ensure that robust assessments are completed before any child moves into or leaves the home. These assessments are carried out in partnership with the child's wider professional network, ensuring that each child's needs are clearly understood and effectively planned for. As a result, staff are well prepared to provide care that promotes children's safety and emotional wellbeing. Children who remain living in the home are supported to understand and manage these changes, which helps to minimise disruption and maintain stability within the home.

The home environment is welcoming and decorated to a high standard. Leaders and managers demonstrate a clear commitment to continual improvement in the home. Developments are informed by children's views, wishes and identified needs. For example, the introduction of a cinema room and the enhancement of the sensory room provide children with opportunities for relaxation and therapeutic support. These improvements make a positive contribution to children's experiences and overall wellbeing.

Each child has a comprehensive education plan that clearly identifies their individual targets. Leaders track attainment and attendance effectively and work in close partnership with education providers to ensure that children experience consistent approaches that support their learning. When barriers to learning are identified, staff respond promptly and proactively. As a result, children receive timely and appropriate interventions that promote positive education outcomes.

Children are supported effectively to identify and achieve their individual goals. Bespoke reward systems are used to recognise and celebrate the progress they make. Children also benefit from access to a structured mentoring programme that offers opportunities for work-related experience and guidance from a wide range of professionals. This broadens children's aspirations and supports them to plan positively for their futures.

Children benefit from a wide range of experiences and activities that are carefully planned around their individual interests. Staff take time to understand what motivates each child. As a result, children are supported to build confidence and independence.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

There has been a significant safeguarding incident where staff did not follow the guidance within a child's individual risk plan. Agreed guidance relating to the child's access to free time was not adhered to. As a result, the child's missing-from-home protocol was not implemented. Staff did not seek timely or appropriate guidance from senior leaders to help them assess and manage the potential risks. Consequently, one

child was exposed to a serious risk of harm. Following the incident, leaders undertook a timely and comprehensive review, and appropriate actions have since been taken to address the identified shortfalls in practice. However, this incident demonstrates that safeguarding practice and staff adherence to established procedures are not yet consistently robust.

Children's individual risk plans are generally detailed and are reviewed regularly by managers. Safety plans are developed with children, ensuring that their views, wishes and feelings are considered. While this approach has the potential to support meaningful change, the impact is not yet consistent across the home. For some children, incidents have reduced and their ability to recognise and manage risks has improved. However, this progress is not reliably sustained for all children. As a result, children's confidence, resilience and independence develop at varying rates, and further work is required to ensure that the benefits of this approach are consistently realised.

When children experience restrictions in their movements, these are used only when necessary and as a last resort to ensure their immediate safety and the safety of others. Staff apply their knowledge of each child effectively to understand the underlying triggers that may lead to the use of restraint. Incidents are closely monitored by managers, who provide robust oversight through a therapeutic and reflective lens. This demonstrates a strong commitment to promoting children's dignity and wellbeing.

Consequences and sanctions are consistently proportionate and appropriate to the individual needs of children. Leaders and staff avoid punitive approaches, focusing instead on promoting positive behaviour through meaningful engagement with children. Staff prioritise the use of positive praise, ensuring that children feel proud of the achievements they make.

When children raise concerns or express worries, the manager responds promptly and takes all reasonable steps to address them effectively. Children are kept informed throughout the process so that they understand how their concerns are being reviewed and resolved. This approach ensures that children's voices are heard, their views are respected and their rights are upheld.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has a thorough understanding of each child's starting point and carefully monitors the progress they make during their time in the home. Leaders and staff actively seek and listen to children's views about their goals, achievements and experiences. This ensures that children remain central to all aspects of planning and to the ongoing development of the home's practice.

Leaders and managers respond promptly when concerns about staff practice are identified. This proactive approach helps to maintain good standards of care and has a positive impact on children's safety and wellbeing. Managers ensure that the appropriate professionals are informed and that formal disciplinary procedures are followed when

necessary. This robust oversight and accountability help to ensure that children receive consistent, good-quality care and that their safety is promoted.

Staff receive regular supervision and annual appraisals, and they have clear, individualised development plans to support their professional growth. Staff consistently report positively about the support and guidance they receive from leaders, which contributes to a skilled and dedicated workforce. There have, however, been occasions when a potential conflict of interest within a supervision arrangement was not fully assessed. This impacted the overall effectiveness and objectivity of supervision for the staff member involved. Leaders have reflected on this and recognise that strengthening the supervision policy, including clearer guidance on the suitability and impartiality of supervisors, will help to ensure that supervision remains robust and fully supportive of staff development.

Leaders and managers have embedded a strong culture of research-informed practice across the home. This approach is applied consistently and meaningfully to enhance children's emotional, social and physical development. Staff use this knowledge to inform their day-to-day practice and strengthen the quality of care that children receive.

Leaders and staff work proactively and positively with a wide range of professionals to ensure that children receive coordinated and consistent support. They actively seek to build effective working relationships to secure positive outcomes for children. Feedback from external professionals about the care children receive is consistently positive. Professionals report that staff are proactive, child focused and responsive in meeting children's individual needs.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) 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(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the home's child protection policies. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(v)(vi)(vii)) This specifically relates to the review of safety measures to ensure that children are adequately safeguarded when they are outside of the home.	27 March 2026

Recommendation

- The registered person must have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriate, qualified and experienced professional. (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)

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: 2509300

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Registered provider address: Lupton Tower, Lupton, Carnforth, Lancashire LA6 2PR

Responsible individual: Louise Hyams

Registered manager: Philip Carolan

Inspector

Charlotte Tippet, Social Care Inspector

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