

2585926

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is owned and managed by a private provider. It provides care for up to 7 children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

At the time of the inspection, 7 children were living at the home. The inspectors spoke with all the children.

The manager registered with Ofsted in November 2020.

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 December 2025

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	good
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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: 27 February 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/02/2025	Full	Good
15/01/2024	Full	Good
07/02/2023	Full	Good
26/10/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children receive exceptional care that is individualised to their needs. Children are making excellent progress and enjoy positive relationships with staff. Interactions are regular and warm in nature. Children report feeling close to staff and say that they can go to them for support. Most children rated the home as being 9 out of 10, with one child saying that it was 10 out of 10.

Before moving into the home, not all the children attended school. They now attend regularly, some with significantly improved attendance, and all are making academic progress.

Some children, who were experiencing significant emotional challenges when they first moved into the home, now feel more settled and emotionally secure. This is because of the consistent support and commitment of staff. This is evidenced through their behaviour and a reduction in the number of incidents. One child, who was being held by staff on a regular basis, is now much more settled and has not needed any physical interventions for many months.

The registered manager and the deputy manager have introduced some innovative practices, which have been shared widely through the organisation. Some of these projects are embedded into practice, while some are in the early formative stages. One of these is an environmental project, which children readily participate in and enjoy. One child holds a 'management' role in this project, providing skills and knowledge that will stay with them into adulthood. Another project involves children being encouraged to have 'jobs' in the home. One child is a chef, another is a food and beverage manager, and another is an outdoor area manager. The registered manager has created a process where children apply for a job and are interviewed. The children who want to participate in the scheme are given weekly wages, and one child, who was injured and unable to work for a period, received sick pay. This has created a work ethos in the home and a message that effort is rewarded. Children have responded very positively to this scheme, and there are plans to roll this out to other homes.

Support for children moving into the home is managed sensitively and with care to help them settle in. For one child placed far away from their home, the staff made long journeys to visit and then supported the child to visit in turn. This enabled the child to feel informed and in control of their journey into the home. For another child, staff worked in partnership with their previous carers, arranging visits and creating detailed plans that considered the child's wishes and views.

Children can express their views in a variety of ways. This includes daily chats and targeted key-work sessions that often relate to specific topics, such as their family relationships and their education. Children's meetings are also held regularly and are well

attended by the children. These processes mean that children's views are given priority and, where appropriate, are used to support the progress of each child.

Children have positive experiences while living in the home. They have personalised bedrooms and access to a range of activities, including books, games and computer consoles. Children also have access to a well-resourced games room, offering a range of sporting activities. Additionally, children attend clubs such as football and horse riding. Children also enjoy breaks away in the school holidays.

Children are well supported to move on from the home in a planned and supported way. Staff work well with children's social workers to progress plans for children. When appropriate to do so and requested by the child, staff attend children's reviews long after they have left. This demonstrates the staff's significant and ongoing commitment to children.

Children receive support from staff when they are struggling with their feelings and emotions. This includes consideration of their physical and emotional safety, as well as input from the home's therapist. However, on occasions, key-work sessions are not recorded in a way that is helpful to the child and are not always written in line with the home's model of care.

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

Staff manage children's risks well. Risk assessments are kept up to date and reflect children's lived experiences. Staff understand children's risks and vulnerabilities and know what action they must take to keep children safe. Children say that they feel safe in the home.

Safer recruitment processes are in place for all staff. This means that only those staff who are suitable to work with children are employed in the home.

The home provides strong therapeutic support for the children, and there is an in-house therapist in place. Children and their social workers speak highly of this work and value this therapeutic input. The home's therapist also delivers training and support to the team of staff to develop their knowledge and skills when working with children.

Consequences are used infrequently in the home. This, together with the progress children make, indicates that the children are settled and staff support their behaviour effectively.

Staff de-escalate difficult and challenging situations well. This has led to a reduction in physical intervention incidents, and these are now rare. The registered manager's overview and evaluation could be more detailed to be clear that children are always provided the opportunity to speak to someone independent about what happened as needed.

Children rarely go missing from home; there have been just 2 incidents since the last inspection. When they do, staff make efforts to contact and speak to people in their network. However, the records do not clearly outline whether staff searched for the children on these occasions. When children return safely, staff welcome them back and talk to them about why they went missing and what happened while they were missing from the home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is inspirational and leads by example. He is supported by an experienced deputy manager who shares his vision for the home. As a management team, they are committed to the children receiving high-quality care that both supports their needs and promotes their potential.

Managers have high standards for the staff team. This translates through the staff team and the care provided to the children. Staff are highly motivated and empowered to support the children in all aspects of their lives.

Staff say that they are well supported by managers who listen and are responsive. Staff have regular supervision sessions and receive annual appraisals. This allows managers to provide targeted support where required and to have clear oversight of staff performance across the home.

New staff to the home benefit from a high-quality induction plan. Staff speak positively about the high level of support that they receive during their probationary period. This supports the home to have a highly supported, knowledgeable and suitably motivated staff team.

Managers have strong oversight of the home. They use external scrutiny processes, as well as their own management auditing and monitoring systems, to ensure that staff practice remains of a high quality and that children's needs continue to be met.

The excellent quality of professional relationships means that challenge to other agencies isn't regularly required. However, when it is required, managers challenge and escalate concerns appropriately and sensitively. Examples were identified during this inspection of how these challenges have resulted in positive changes to children's daily lived experiences.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all staff understand the importance of careful, objective and clear recording. Information about the child must be recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 62, paragraph 14.4)
- The registered person should ensure that any child who has been physically held is given the opportunity express their feelings about their experience of the hold as soon as is practicable. Children should be offered the opportunity to access advocacy support to help them with this. ('Guide to the Children's Homes regulations, including the quality standards,' page 50, paragraph 9.60)
- The registered person should ensure that staff are clear about the procedures to be followed and the roles and responsibilities of staff when a child is missing from care, or away from the home without permission, and how staff should support the child on return to the home. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 45, paragraph 9.28)

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: 2585926

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: Liam Curry

Inspector

Jon Collins, Social Care Inspector
Paula Shepherd, Regulatory Inspection Manager

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