

2594854

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is part of a national organisation. The home provides care for up to five children with emotional and social difficulties. At the time of this inspection, four children were living in the home. A fifth child moved out of the home in July 2025.

This home is on the same site as a school and two other children's homes that are all part of the same organisation. The inspectors only inspected the social care provision of this home on this site. The other two children's homes on the same site were not part of this inspection.

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 July 2025

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: 25 February 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
25/02/2025	Full	Good
20/02/2024	Full	Good
08/11/2022	Full	Good
05/01/2022	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The four children currently living in the home were seen and spoken with as part of the inspection. A fifth child, who lived in the home until July 2025, was spoken with via phone call during the inspection.

The staff team at this home is largely long-standing. This provides children with consistency of care from a staff team whose members know them well and understand their needs, likes and dislikes. Staff are skilled at developing positive and trusting relationships with children. These relationships help children settle and make progress.

Managers and staff work with school staff to remove barriers to children attending education. For some children, this support has led to significant positive outcomes. For example, one child had not attended school for a significant period before moving to this home. This child is now attending school regularly and achieving academically. Another two children at this home recently sat their GCSE exams.

One child's school attendance has declined significantly over the past few months. Managers have worked closely with education professionals and the organisation's therapeutic service to support the child. However, at the time of the inspection, the support in place had not yet been effective in improving this child's attendance or engagement at school.

Staff from the organisation's own mentoring scheme provide children with opportunities to access work experience and careers advice. Staff support children to prepare for independence and to develop their own self-care skills. One child was recently supported to have a well-planned and positive move out of the home.

For another child, planning for their move from the home has been delayed. This has caused the child some anxiety. Managers have advocated for the child and made some challenge to the local authority regarding planning for this child. However, this challenge has not been effective, and managers have not yet escalated their concerns further.

Children take part in activities and clubs in the local community with support and encouragement from staff. For example, one child goes go karting and attends a kickboxing class weekly, which they enjoy.

Feedback from professionals and a family member is generally positive about the care provided to children and the relationships that they form with staff. Children's views are regularly sought regarding their care. However, it is not always clear how children's views have been used to adapt and inform the care they receive.

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

When significant safeguarding incidents take place, managers follow relevant procedures and take appropriate, immediate action to safeguard children. However, following one significant incident, leaders and managers did not take enough action to challenge external professionals when their response was not robust or timely enough.

When children self-harm, staff provide appropriate and empathetic responses and take action to ensure that children are safe. Managers and staff work effectively with the organisation's therapeutic team to develop and review the strategies that are in place to support children. Guidance is in place for staff on how best to support children who self-harm. However, this guidance is not specific enough on how to safeguard children if there are serious incidents of self-harm.

Staff speak to children about online safety and how to keep themselves safe. There are appropriate, individualised measures in place to monitor children's phone use depending on their individual needs. Staff worked effectively with one child over a period to develop their knowledge and understanding of online safety. As a result, this child was able to have their own phone and manage this safely and responsibly. However, the safety measures and checks that are in place around games consoles do not give staff a clear enough understanding of the content children access via these devices.

There have been six incidents of restraint at this home. When restraint is used, this is generally in appropriate circumstances and to prevent children or others being harmed.

When incidents take place, staff speak to children about what happened and reinforce expectations of appropriate behaviour. Some records of discussions demonstrate the strength of the relationships between staff and children, with staff showing appropriate curiosity and sensitively exploring children's feelings with them. However, this is not consistent. Some discussions with children and consequences put in place following incidents are not therapeutic or restorative in nature.

Managers are aware that this is an area for development and have begun to take action to address this with the staff team through additional training and reflection. However, at the time of the inspection, these measures had not been fully progressed.

Door alarms are in use for some children. Staff speak to children about the reasons for these being used and appropriate consent agreements are in place. However, no clear timescale or mechanism for the review of these measures are in place.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home is led by a suitably experienced and qualified manager. The manager had a period away from the home for several months returning in April 2025. During her time away from the home, the home was overseen by another registered manager from the organisation.

Staff were positive about how the changes in manager were planned and delivered. A handover period took place between the current and covering manager, which limited disruption for children and staff. Staff identified that the deputy manager has also been a valuable source of support and consistency during this period.

Staff say that they feel well supported by managers and enjoy working at this home. Team meetings are used effectively by managers to share information with staff and to reinforce expectations. In between meetings, the manager communicates regularly with staff about important updates and changes to support strategies with children.

The manager has a strong understanding of the needs of the children living at the home and of the staff team's areas for development. Appropriate monitoring systems are in place, which the manager uses to track children's progress. Following incidents, management oversight on records is generally of good quality. Managers reflect on significant incidents and identify learning from these. However, it is not always clear how identified learning has been applied to current practice.

One complaint has been received from a child since the last inspection. When children raise concerns about their care or staff practice, these are taken seriously and investigated and responded to appropriately.

Staff receive appropriate training specific to the needs of the children living in the home. All staff at the home have received an annual appraisal of their practice. Staff generally receive regular supervision. However, during recent school holidays, there was a delay to some staff receiving supervision. The manager is aware of this issue and is considering options for the next school holiday, to ensure that staff receive regular supervision in line with the organisations policy.

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
In meeting the quality standards, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— seek to involve each child's placing authority effectively in the child's care, in accordance with the child's relevant plans; seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child's needs; if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority's or a relevant person's performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child's needs are met in accordance with the child's relevant plans. (Regulation 5 (a)(b)(c))	28 August 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that clear and up to date guidance is in place for staff on how best to support children and protect them from harm. This refers specifically to measures in place relating to the use of games consoles and actions staff should take to support and safeguard children when they self-harm. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 39, paragraph 9.5)
- The registered person should ensure that the reasoning for any restrictive practices or monitoring of children is clearly documented along with clear timescales and mechanism for review. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.16)

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: 2594854

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

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

Responsible individual: Sarah Roe

Registered manager: Claudia Guggenmos

Inspector

Janet Jauregui, Social Care Inspector

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