

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 eight children with emotional and social difficulties. At the time of this inspection, seven children were living in the home.

The registered manager has been in post since May 2023.

This home is on the same site as a school and two other children's homes which are all part of the same organisation. The inspector 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: 20 and 21 February 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 8 November 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/11/2022	Full	Good
05/01/2022	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Staff know the children well. Staff invest time getting to know each individual child's bespoke needs with a desire to understand how they can best care for and support the child to progress and achieve. Staff speak with pride about children's achievements and ensure that these are celebrated. All children have made progress from their starting points and have experienced a range of positive outcomes.

Staff are quick to build secure and trusted relationships with children. Staff use meticulous planning to help ensure that children who are new to the home or are ready to leave the home experience positive outcomes. For example, one child recently returned home to their family. Staff sensitively constructed a nine-month plan with a set goal each month that supported the child to learn vital independence skills. Staff were diligent in their approach, the child embraced staff's support and the move back home was a success.

Staff proactively encourage children to attend school and are ambitious for them to do well in their education. For example, one child new to the home had not taken part in any educational activity for a significant period. The child is now attending school full time and making good progress. When a child is struggling to attend school, staff work effectively with the school and the in-house therapies team to adjust the child's timetable and positively encourage the child to return to full-time education as soon as possible.

Staff take complaints from children seriously and are prompt in their response. Children are treated with dignity and respect and staff take time to listen to children's concerns and take action to ensure that positive outcomes are achieved. One child who made a complaint received several compassionate and caring letters from the manager to see if a compromise could be met. During conversations with staff, the child was able to explain what staff could do to help and why. As a result, the manager changed staff practice and the child triumphantly achieved their goal.

Staff understand the importance each child places on spending meaningful time with their relatives. Staff are aware of the negative impact not having this contact can have on each child's emotional well-being. Staff work effectively with family members to help ensure that children enjoy beneficial time with their loved ones. One relative stated that staff have been really good and really supportive in helping them see their child, even at short notice.

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

Staff are competent and understand the support each child needs to feel safe and be protected from harm. Staff place great importance on consistently sticking to clear boundaries to promote safety and encourage acceptable positive behaviours in children. If incidents occur in or outside of the home, staff respond promptly and

effectively to protect children and support them to manage their own behaviour safely. Incident records are detailed and effective oversight by the manager provides key information that enables staff to understand the children better, change practice and minimise the risk of similar incidents occurring in the future.

Staff take a positive risk approach and are not risk-averse when enabling children to take age-appropriate risks so they can develop and grow. Staff teach children to learn important life skills needed to be able to live independently and keep themselves safe. Children enjoy spending free time with friends in the community without any unnecessary restrictions. Children are encouraged to develop a sense of their own identity and form good relationships with peers.

Staff have used restraint as a last resort to protect children and those around them from harm. Records of incidents involving restraint are well written and robustly reviewed by the manager, with any lessons learned promptly shared with staff. The children involved are consulted and their views are obtained to inform staff practice. Effective conflict management following an incident ensures that restorative practice is used to improve the relationships between the staff and children involved. It is positive that the use of restraint has significantly reduced.

Staff follow a clear protocol when children go missing from the home. Staff take urgent action to implement a well-coordinated response to help protect children, reduce their risk of harm, and ensure a safe return home. Family and relevant professionals are informed in a timely manner and records are of a good standard with good managerial oversight.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The passionate and caring manager has developed a culture in the home that has been influential in positively changing the lives of the children they support. All staff embrace the manager's vision and ethos for the home and work tirelessly to ensure that children achieve and make progress in many aspects of their lives. One family member remarked that the manager is brilliant and really friendly, and will do anything and stop at nothing to help their child.

The creative and inspirational manager has an in-depth understanding of the unique skills and expertise of her individual staff members. The manager uses this knowledge to empower their staff to use the strengths they have, to help improve the lives of the children they support. For example, they tasked one member of staff with a known passion for research with identifying important research models that would encourage staff retention, provide positive role modelling for children and bring about a calmer, more settled environment. The outcome of this work, while in its infancy, has already been influential in upskilling the staff team, helping children to feel more settled and reduce the number of incidents that occur in or outside of the home.

Staff express a strong passion for working at the home and put the children at the heart of everything they do. Staff spoke positively about their inspirational manager and share the ambitious approach they have for children to do well and progress. Staff benefit from excellent supervision and have regular access to an in-house therapy team to support their development and enhance their well-being. Training is of a high standard. Staff are encouraged to attain qualifications to aid their professional development and ensure that they provide high-quality care that continues to positively change the lives of the children they support.

There is strong collaborative working between the home and partner agencies. The capable manager confidently challenges services when appropriate to ensure that the best possible outcomes for children are achieved. This has had a positive impact on children's experiences and helped to improve and enhance their futures.

The manager ensures that the physical environment is maintained to a high standard. It has a warm, homely feel to it and provides a safe space from which children can grow and flourish. Any damage to the property is quickly repaired so the home does not lose its lovely ambience.

No requirements or recommendations have been raised at this inspection.

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: Neil Hedges

Registered manager: Claudia Guggenmos

Inspector

Gary Turney, Social Care Inspector

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