

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, five children were living in the home.

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: 25 and 26 February 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: 20 February 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
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

Children receive care from a consistent staff team. This has enabled children to form strong and trusting relationships with it. Staff spend time talking to children about sensitive or difficult subjects. Children are encouraged to reflect on their behaviours and actions and how they impact on other people. Children are receptive to this and have developed greater awareness and understanding of themselves and those around them. This has led to children developing strategies to be more aware of their emotions and a reduction in negative behaviours in the home. Staff support children to expand their participation in local charity work and to learn about different cultures.

Family members and professionals are positive about the progress that children make and the care that children receive. They said that they receive regular, helpful communication from staff that allows them to keep up to date on what is going on for children. Family members said that staff support them to spend time with children. Staff talk to children about family time and plan focused and enjoyable activities that promote positive relationships. Staff have access to clear guidance on how to support children in the event that family time is not positive.

Staff support children to receive education and celebrate their achievements. Two children have gone from not attending school to having 100% attendance. Children said that when they do not want to go to school, staff talk to them about the barriers to them attending. However, some records that detail children's day-to-day lives and staff efforts to encourage children to attend school provide limited detail.

Staff generally meet children's health needs. They support them to attend medical appointments and to take any necessary medication, as well as listen to children's concerns. Staff work closely with the clinical team to consider and plan how to meet children's mental health needs and to support them to attend therapy and engage with life-story work. Actions taken to address concerns about a child's oral hygiene have not achieved the desired outcomes.

The quality of planning for a child to move into and out of the home is thorough. Before children move in, staff gather and consider information about the child and consider this in line with the skill set of the team and the needs and behaviours of the children who already live in the home. Planned visits before a child moved in allowed for relationship building to begin. Planning for a child to move out of the home focused on their needs. Their memories of living in the home are collated and documented in charming booklets.

Children are encouraged to develop independence skills. Helpful and focused workshops prepare children for adult life, such as attending job interviews and independent living. Two children have gained and maintained part-time employment.

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

All children who live in the home were seen. Interactions between all children and staff were positive, showing fun, warm and responsive relationships. Two children were spoken to, with three children choosing not to speak. Two children said that they feel safe and like living in the home, giving ratings of 8 out of 10 and 9.5 out of 10. They talked about their positive relationships with each other and with staff. All family members and professionals spoken to said that they believe children are safe and well cared for.

Carers have a good knowledge and understanding of the risks that children may experience. Guidance on measures that staff should take to support children and reduce risks, such as safe use of the internet, vaping and cannabis use, is clear. Staff approach sensitive topics with children in a child-centred way, providing children with guidance, knowledge and advice as well as informing them of the potential consequences of their actions. Where necessary and children agree, referrals are made to external agencies for more specialist support.

Children are settled, and the number of incidents in the home has been reduced. Staff are guided by robust documents that detail how to support children when they exhibit behaviours that they have shown or may show. Restraint has been used as a last resort. Following incidents, staff engage children in thorough, reflective conversations to explore their actions. There is a focus on reparative work and repairing relationships in the home.

Children have gone missing from the home on two occasions. Staff took prompt action to inform other professionals and look for the children. Planning for the event that children go missing from home is good quality.

Safeguarding concerns are addressed quickly. Clear chronologies show effective working and information-sharing with other professionals. When appropriate, children are consulted on decisions that are made about them. This includes devising agreements in relation to phone use or free time and in relation to deciding what consequences should be implemented following incidents of concern. A door sensor has been used appropriately.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The home benefits from an experienced and reflective manager who was present for most of the inspection, having been at a meeting when the inspection started. His presence in the home and his style of working have allowed him to build positive relationships with children and staff. He leads an enthusiastic and committed staff team.

Staff spoke positively about the home, leaders, managers and the working environment. They value the consistent, supportive team and the collaborative decision-making that takes place. They know the children they care for well and are committed to providing

them with the best level of care. Staff receive regular supervision and support from their manager. They said that they value the development opportunities in the organisation.

Managers monitor the progress that children make. Their oversight of incidents is reflective. They gain feedback from children and consider trends and changes in their behaviours. This information is used to analyse children's needs, experiences and progress. However, this learning is not always transferred to care planning for children. Care planning lacks direction and does not provide clear actions or aims for staff to follow.

Managers gain children's views about the care that they receive. However, no curiosity was shown or action taken to determine the reasons for a child saying that they did not always feel safe.

Leaders and managers manage concerns in relation to the practice of carers appropriately. When a multi-agency response is required, information is shared promptly. Investigations that are carried out are thorough, and actions are appropriate. When children have raised concerns about other professionals, staff have advocated for them and raised these concerns. Staff provide children with feedback once their concerns have been investigated.

Team meetings are held regularly and are well attended. They are used to share information about children, practice and interesting research presentations. Planning to implement learning from research into practice is in place, emphasising the learning and development culture in the home.

Recruitment practice ensures that checks necessary to determine whether staff are safe to work with children are completed.

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 health and well-being standard is that— the health and well-being needs of children are met; children receive advice, services and support in relation to their health and well-being; and children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff help each child to— achieve the health and well-being outcomes that are recorded in the child's relevant plans; and understand the child's health and well-being needs and the options that are available in relation to the child's health and well-being, in a way that is appropriate to the child's age and understanding. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b)(c)(2)(a)(i)(ii)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that when children's health needs are not being met, planning is reviewed and revised, and actions for staff to take are clearly set out.	7 May 2025

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that documents setting out care planning for children have clear actions for staff to follow. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 52, paragraph 10.5)
- The registered person should ensure that actions taken to support children to access education and the events of children's day-to-day lives are clearly documented. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 28, paragraph 5.13)

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:

Registered manager: Claudia Guggenmos
Richard Gibbons

Inspector

Carla Simkiss, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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