

2594902

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's statement of purpose states that it provides care for up to five children with social and emotional difficulties. At the time of this inspection, five children were living in the home and they all spoke with the inspectors.

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

The registered manager is currently off work. The home's deputy manager has been appointed as the interim manager, and they have submitted their application to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 November 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	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: 22 May 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/05/2024	Full	Good
20/09/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
14/06/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good
15/02/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children say that they like living at their home. One child rated their home 9.6 out of 10 and said that they would 'recommend living at the home to other young children'. Children are supported to live cooperatively together and take part in a range of enjoyable activities, including ice skating, fishing, horse riding and youth clubs. Regular group meetings bring children together to share their views and wishes about their care.

Children are making good progress from their starting points. Those who previously struggled to attend school now attend regularly and are achieving their individual targets. Children are supported to attend medical appointments, and their health needs are met effectively. Family members recognise and value the progress that their children have made since living at the home.

Children are supported to develop positive and trusting relationships with staff. Staff know the children well and their interactions are characterised by warmth, kindness and good humour. Children say that they get on well with staff and each other. When disagreements arise, staff help children to resolve their conflicts safely. Staff capture and celebrate the positive moments that children share together by creating memory books, photo albums and canvas prints that are displayed around their home.

The home provides a warm and comfortable environment for children, with plenty of space for them to use. A wide range of games, books and resources are available to support children's play and learning. Children are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms, which are reflective of their personalities and interests. This helps children to feel valued and develop a sense of belonging and stability.

Two children have been supported to move out of the home due to significant risk to themselves and others. Managers demonstrated a commitment to supporting the children to move out in a positive way and worked collaboratively with the wider professional network to ensure that the children's needs were met. After the children moved out, managers and staff reflected on the care provided and identified areas for development to inform future practice.

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

Staff use door alarms at night to help keep children safe. The use of door alarms is regularly reviewed and intended to mitigate a specific risk at certain times. Although safety plans are clear about when door alarms must be used, they are not used consistently or effectively. As a result, children are left at increased risk of harm during the night. Leaders and managers do not have robust oversight of when door alarms are used, so they were unaware of this inconsistent practice.

When children raise concerns about the practice of care staff, leaders and managers take action to protect them from harm. However, when concerns are considered 'low level', the rationale for decision-making is not recorded. When concerns relate to other professionals, leaders and managers do not play an active role in determining the actions taken. As a result, leaders and managers are not always satisfied with the decisions that are made. Leaders and managers do not do enough to challenge this or assure themselves that robust action has been taken.

Staff do not always provide children with the personal protective equipment that they need to take part in activities safely. Children ride their bikes without helmets and staff do not intervene to prevent avoidable harm. Some staff do not fully understand their responsibility to help children make safe choices and keep them safe.

Staff use a range of strategies to help children to express themselves safely. As a result, the use of restraint has reduced. When restraint is necessary, it is proportionate to the risk of harm. Following the use of restraint, managers and staff seek to understand the 'function' of the behaviour and what could be done differently in the future. The home's clinical team provides support and guidance to staff to promote reflection and learning and identify any changes needed to children's support plans.

Children rarely go missing from this home. When they do, staff follow the agreed procedures, including searching the local area, contacting the child, their friends and their family, and notifying the police. When children return home, they are welcomed back, and staff explore the reasons why they ran away. When appropriate, staff advocate for children so that changes are made to their care plans. However, missing-from-home records are not always accurate. They do not clearly outline the time that children went missing or the duration of their absence. As a result, it is difficult to monitor patterns and ensure robust safeguarding action.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is currently on planned leave. The deputy manager has been appointed as the interim manager and has applied to register with Ofsted. The interim manager knows the children well and provides consistent and stable support to children and staff. Staff say that they enjoy working in the home and speak positively about the children they care for.

Staff apply the therapeutic approach outlined in the statement of purpose well. Staff speak confidently about using this in practice. Children benefit from a consistently good standard of nurturing care.

Staff are provided with training opportunities to support them to develop the skills and knowledge that they require to meet children's needs. Staff receive regular and effective supervision sessions and attend team meetings. These are child focused, with an appropriate emphasis on how staff help children to stay safe. Children's plans are updated regularly and clearly outline their needs and the support they require.

Staff help children to make complaints when they are unhappy with decisions about their care. Managers and staff support children to access independent advocacy to ensure that their voice is heard.

Leaders and managers have identified vulnerabilities in external monitoring arrangements required under regulation 44. Feedback from children, children's families and professionals is not sufficiently central when determining areas for development. In response, leaders and managers have sought external monitoring from another provider.

When staff are employed, leaders and managers are not always able to demonstrate that safer recruitment procedures have been followed. There is a lack of scrutiny when information revealed by employment checks are inconsistent or unclear. The manager is not sufficiently curious and cannot determine that all staff are suitable to work with children.

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; manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person; and that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(v)(b)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that children are helped to stay safe effectively. Staff must have a sound understanding of risk and take robust action to reduce it. Specifically, staff must competently follow safety plans to ensure that children are protected from harm. This includes ensuring that children are provided with the necessary personal protective equipment when they are participating in activities, and that strategies to reduce risk at nighttime are applied consistently.	30 January 2026

In addition, the registered person must ensure that there is robust oversight of how concerns about the practice of other professionals are managed. If the registered person is not satisfied with how concerns are being managed, they must escalate their concerns and ensure that information is shared appropriately.	
The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person may only— employ an individual to work at the children's home. if the individual satisfies the requirements in paragraph (3). The requirements are that— full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2. (Regulation 32 (1) (2)(a) (3)(d)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that they review safer recruitment checks for each member of staff to determine that they are suitable to work with children. The registered person must be professionally curious and seek to clarify and resolve any areas of uncertainty.	30 January 2026

Recommendation

- The registered person should oversee the welfare of children in their care. If concerns about staff are not shared with external agencies, there should be a clear rationale to support this decision. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.23)

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: 2594902

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

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

Responsible individual: Hayley Lukaszewski

Registered manager: Sophie Stephenson

Inspectors

Martin Brown, Social Care Inspector

Carly Parry, Social Care Inspector

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