

2594902

Registered provider: Witherslack Group

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home is operated by a private national provider. It provides care for up to five children. At the time of this inspection, five children were living in the home.

The provider operates a school on the same site as the children's home. Only the children's home was inspected at this time.

The registered manager has been in post and registered with Ofsted since May 2020.

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 June 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **requires improvement to be good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 15 February 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
15/02/2022	Full	Requires improvement to be good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Overall, the five children living in the home have made progress from their starting points, and this was confirmed by the external professionals who contributed to the inspection. However, progress for all the children is not consistent and sustained. For example, two children are being supported to achieve a healthier weight. Yet inspectors observed staff failing to ensure that meals and snacks available for children are consistently healthy and nutritious.

The children attend the provider's school, and records capture the progress the children are making. However, attendance and punctuality for some of the children is not consistently good. One child, while making progress when in school, sometimes chooses not to go to school. Despite attempts by the staff, they were unable to engage this child in alternative forms of learning. The inspectors saw that this child stayed in bed for most of the day.

The children are cared for by staff who, in the main, know them well. Nevertheless, there have been repeated changes to the staff team. As a result, not all staff are experienced, confident and sufficiently skilled to support the children when they are most upset. As a result, children do not always receive the support outlined in their plans and have not been able to form long-lasting and trusting relationships with staff.

Children's views are sought and recorded, but it is not always clear how they are being acted on and if they bring about change. In some records, the language used is not always child-focused, for example, a child being referred to as 'oppositional' and not at 'base line' when they are upset.

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

Risk assessments and care plans are detailed and robust documents that have the potential to provide staff with clear strategies to respond effectively to the children's behaviours. However, the new staff are not always able to apply these strategies to de-escalate incidents. As a result, some incidents continue for extended periods of time, and other children are not always protected from witnessing damage to their home and staff being assaulted.

Managers' oversight of the incidents takes place but there is insufficient evidence of reflection, learning and impact. This means that the use of restraint, while having decreased since the previous inspection in February 2022, continues to happen.

Sanctions are rarely given; when they are used, they are proportionate and are aimed at promoting improved behaviours and understanding of actions. However,

the records are not accurate and this can cause confusion as to why some sanctions were given.

Professionals who contributed to the inspection report that communication between the home and them is good. They consider that incidents are managed well by staff and they are informed swiftly. They did not raise any safeguarding concerns.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Since the previous inspection, in February 2022, the home has not been consistently managed and led effectively and in line with the home's statement of purpose. The registered manager has received additional support from members of the senior leadership team. This support was in recognition of the shortfalls identified at the previous inspection. However, despite this support, the registered manager has failed to ensure that the practice of staff and the outcomes of the children consistently improve.

The views of the staff who contributed to the inspection were mixed. Not all staff are positive about their experiences of working here. They commented on the impact of not always having sufficient staff, and not feeling confident or sufficiently skilled, and they said that practice is not always consistent. Other staff said that they feel supported by the registered manager.

Staff receive training and for most of the new staff this has helped them to support the children. However, not all the staff receive regular good-quality supervision that enables them to reflect on their role. Opportunities to learn are therefore missed and staff are lacking direction.

Monitoring of the home's records is carried out by both the registered manager and the independent person. In part, this monitoring informs the development of the home. However, the registered manager has failed to consistently apply a rigorous and robust enough approach to the reviewing of all records and practice.

Senior leaders have completed their own internal audit. They had identified serious shortfalls in respect of the management and leadership of the home. In response, they have provided Ofsted with assurances of how they will safeguard the children and improve the management of the home.

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, 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 registered person must ensure that all employees— receive practice-related supervision by a person with appropriate experience. (Regulation 33 (4)(b)) In particular, the registered manager should ensure that all staff receive regular supervision that is line with the home's workforce development plan.	19 August 2022
The leadership and management standard is that the registered person enables, inspires and leads a culture in relation to the children's home that— helps children aspire to fulfil their potential; and promotes their welfare. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— lead and manage the home in a way that is consistent with the approach and ethos, and delivers the outcomes, set out in the home's statement of purpose; ensure that staff work as a team where appropriate; ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child; ensure that the home has sufficient staff to provide care for each child; ensure that the home's workforce provides continuity of care to each child; understand the impact that the quality of care provided in the home is having on the progress and experiences of each	19 August 2022

child and use this understanding to inform the development of the quality of care provided in the home; demonstrate that practice in the home is informed and improved by taking into account and acting on— research and developments in relation to the ways in which the needs of children are best met; and use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(i)(h)) This relates specifically to leaders and managers ensuring that the home is led and managed dynamically and strategically. This means that records should be kept up to date and are accurate, that staff are supervised and supported, and that the monitoring of the home is effective.	
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. 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; understand and develop skills to promote the child's well-being. (Regulation 10 (1)(a)(b)(c)(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iv)) The leaders and manager must ensure that staff follow the healthy eating plans for each child. This means children are	19 August 2022

safeguarded from eating excessive amounts of unhealthy foods.	
The positive relationships standard is that children are helped to develop, and to benefit from, relationships based on— mutual respect and trust; an understanding about acceptable behaviour; and positive responses to other children and adults. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— meet each child’s behavioural and emotional needs, as set out in the child’s relevant plans; help each child to develop socially aware behaviour; encourage each child to take responsibility for the child’s behaviour, in accordance with the child’s age and understanding; help each child to develop and practise skills to resolve conflicts positively and without harm to anyone; communicate to each child expectations about the child’s behaviour and ensure that the child understands those expectations in accordance with the child’s age and understanding; help each child to understand, in a way that is appropriate according to the child’s age and understanding, personal, sexual and social relationships, and how those relationships can be supportive or harmful; strive to gain each child’s respect and trust; understand how children’s previous experiences and present emotions can be communicated through behaviour and have the competence and skills to interpret these and develop positive relationships with children; are provided with supervision and support to enable them to understand and manage their own feelings and responses to	19 August 2022

the behaviour and emotions of children, and to help children to do the same;

de-escalate confrontations with or between children, or potentially violent behaviour by children;

that each child is encouraged to build and maintain positive relationships with others.

(Regulation 11 (1)(a)(b)(c)

(2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)(vi)(viii)(ix)(x)(xi)(b))

This relates to the registered manager ensuring all staff are suitably trained, skilled and experienced to support and respond to the children when they are upset, and to make sure that all staff are equipped with the necessary skills to de-escalate incidents when children are upset and to reduce and prevent instances when staff are harmed.

Also, the registered manager should ensure that the staff protect each child from the impact of witnessing another child being upset.

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

Registered provider address: Witherslack Group, Lupton Tower, Lupton, Carnforth LA6 2PR

Responsible individual: Leigh Bown

Registered manager: Jackelyn Bradley

Inspectors

Linda Bond, Social Care Inspector

Penelope Kutz, Social Care Inspector

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