

2614937

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is registered to provide care for up to four children with social and emotional difficulties. At the time of the inspection, four children were living at the home. They have all been living at the home since the last inspection.

The home is run by a private organisation that operates several registered children's homes, including two on the same site. The inspector only inspected this home.

The provider operates a school on the same site as the children's home. The inspector only inspected the social care provision during this inspection.

There is no registered manager for the home. However, a new manager has been appointed and he has applied to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 August 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: 11 December 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
11/12/2024		
20/11/2023	Full	Requires improvement
	Full	Good
01/11/2022	Full	Good
01/12/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the last inspection, there has been a strong focus on making improvements to the service. Changes have been made to the management of the home and the systems to support the children and staff. Staff are committed to creating a homely environment where children feel comfortable. As a result of the changes, children receive a better quality of care and staff are well supported.

Children like living in the home, where they receive nurturing, personalised care. The staff provide high-quality care and support to the children, and understand their needs and vulnerabilities. Staff talk fondly and positively about the children, and they are proud of the progress that each child is making. This has helped the children to make significant progress.

All the children attend education at the provider's on-site school. Managers and staff support children's education well and the children are helped to engage and make progress in their education. Staff work closely with school staff to ensure consistency of approach. All the children have developed an enjoyment of reading and regularly ask for new books to read.

Children are supported to have positive experiences with their families. Children's views, wishes and feelings are prioritised, helping them to feel heard. Family time is organised sensitively and in collaboration with external professionals and families. This enables the children to enjoy time with their families. Children are also supported to see family members who live far away, as well as being able to invite family members to visit them at the home. The children greatly appreciate these arrangements. One parent said, 'We work in partnership to ensure they have the best possible chance in life.'

Equality, diversity and inclusion are actively promoted in the home. The staff team introduces children to various cultures and religious beliefs. Children are encouraged to explore and value their identities, creating a sense of inclusivity.

Staff hold meaningful conversations with children and address relevant issues. Children's views are regularly sought and listened to, allowing them to contribute to their own care planning. These discussions further strengthen the relationships between the children and staff and help to identify pertinent issues.

Children are encouraged to participate in activities that help them to embark on adventures and create happy memories. However, at times, staff are sent to cover other homes within the organisation. This reduces staffing levels in the home and means that the quality of children's day-to-day experiences and exposure to life outside the home and school are hindered.

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

There is a positive safeguarding culture established in the home. Staff receive relevant safeguarding training and regularly update their knowledge through discussions in team meetings, debriefs and supervision sessions. This ensures clarity on how staff put their knowledge into practice. As a result, staff demonstrate appropriate professional curiosity and consistently take action to ensure the safety of children.

Children are confident in their home and with the staff who care for them. Staff know each child's vulnerabilities and do all that they can to keep them safe. Safeguarding concerns are responded to swiftly and processes for reporting concerns to partner agencies are strong.

Good analysis of any incidents and close working with the clinical team help staff to consider how to reduce risks. Staff know that all behaviour is a form of communication, and they respond consistently when children are distressed. This allows children to feel able to express their emotions and to feel safe, knowing that they will be supported.

Staff carefully consider the use of restraint and rely on their relationships with children to distract, de-escalate, and avoid restraint whenever possible. When restraints have taken place, they are well recorded. Sensitive work is carried out with the child to help them explore their emotions, find different ways in which they can communicate their feelings, increase their feeling of safety, and help repair relationships.

Staff support children sensitively when using the internet and online tools. They put suitable checks and blocks in place when needed, while recognising the need for children to learn to use the internet safely.

Staff work closely with the organisation's in-house clinical team to develop their awareness of children's needs, which has helped staff to develop a good understanding of each child's starting points and ongoing needs, and how to help them to develop relationships and feel safe. There is a strong emphasis placed on ensuring that support is child centred, personalised and responsive. This joined-up approach has had a positive impact and is effective in reducing the children's behaviours that involve risk.

Effective, safer recruitment systems are in place. Recruitment records are clear and well organised, providing evidence that information has been checked and verified by managers. This practice helps to ensure that staff working in the home are safe to do so.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager was appointed in February 2025 and has applied to register with Ofsted. The previous registered manager worked with the new manager for two months to facilitate a smooth transition, ensuring that both the children and staff felt well supported.

The manager has had a positive impact on the home in a short period of time. He works alongside the deputy manager and staff team to ensure that children receive consistent, good-quality care and support.

The manager and deputy know the children well and are aware of the home's strengths and areas for development. They have plans in place to further develop the team and the service. They act on recommended actions from the monthly independent person's visit and use feedback to further enhance the quality of care provided to children.

The manager and deputy manager have high aspirations for all the children and have inspired the same beliefs in the staff team. They ensure that the child-focused approach is embedded in staff practice, and the team is committed to ensuring that children live in a safe environment where they feel equipped to face any challenges.

Supervision arrangements ensure that staff have a formal space for professional development and reflection. The staff team has regular meetings to discuss ideas about service development. Staff benefit from good training opportunities. They are provided with specialist learning opportunities specific to the needs of the children. Clinical consultations with the organisation's specialist professionals further support staff development and the care that they offer to the children. As a result, staff feel valued and well connected, and children benefit from a knowledgeable and cohesive staff team.

There is good morale and enthusiasm in the staff team. Staff said that they feel well supported by the manager, whom they described as knowledgeable, experienced and approachable, and a person who listens. One staff member said, 'Since our new manager joined us, things have gone from strength to strength. His integrity, empathy and knowledge have pulled us all together as a team.'

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children are offered a wide range of activities outside the home and are encouraged to participate in those activities. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 31, paragraph 6.5)
- The registered person should plan staffing levels to ensure that they meet the needs of children and can respond flexibly to unexpected events or opportunities. Staffing structures should promote continuity of care from the child's perspective. If children complain, or give a view on how the staffing structure could be improved to promote the best care for them, appropriate action should be taken. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 54, paragraph 10.15)

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: 2614937

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

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

Responsible individual: Helen Hoggins

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Sharron Dormand, Social Care Inspector

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