

2615005

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a private company. It is registered to provide care for up to seven children who experience social and emotional difficulties.

Children who live in this home also attend one of the provider's independent schools.

The home registered with Ofsted in December 2020. The manager registered in October 2022.

The inspectors observed and spoke to six of the children who live in this home.

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 July 2023

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: 21 November 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
21/11/2022	Full	Good
20/09/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children have developed trusting relationships with the staff who care for them. Children say that they feel listened to, and they can identify a member of staff who they rely on and trust. As a result, children continue to make progress in areas of their lives. One child rated the home as '10 out of 10'.

Children move into the home in a planned way, which benefits the new child moving in as well as the children who already live in the home. One professional described the progress one child has made as 'amazing' and said that their behaviour and presentation are a 'stark difference' to what they previously displayed.

Children attend full-time education provisions. They access a range of learning opportunities, including national curriculum subjects and vocational options. The staff help children to explore further educational opportunities, which helps to raise their aspirations. For some children, their attendance has greatly improved. This means that children's social and learning opportunities have increased. Additionally, children's self-esteem improves, which helps them to flourish.

Staff place the children's well-being at the centre of their practice. Children's achievements are recognised and celebrated. For example, children are awarded 'star of the week' at school. Children have life-story books that include photos of special memories staff have helped them to capture. This helps the children to see that their experiences are important and valued.

Children are regularly consulted with about their home. Children say that the staff regularly ask them about meals and activities and seek their ideas about the home. Children are helped to personalise their bedrooms to reflect their personalities and characters. This helps the children to feel that their opinions are important. Additionally, children feel a sense of belonging and comfort in their surroundings.

Staff encourage and promote children's individual interests. Children enjoy a range of activities for fun and social development. Staff see the importance of children attending clubs separately to the other children who live in the home. This helps the children to see they are valued as individuals and contributes to their positive relationships with staff.

Children donate their time to the local community by taking part in litter picks and charity races. Children say that they are proud of these achievements and how they have helped others. This contributes to the children developing their own personal values and prosocial behaviours.

Staff support the children to develop independence skills in areas such as budgeting, travel and self-care. This helps the children to prepare for adulthood. However, some

children's bedrooms look unkempt. This is a missed opportunity to help the children to develop skills to care for their belongings.

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

The registered manager and staff know the children well. Children have individual risk assessments, which shows that their needs are understood. Regular multi-disciplinary meetings take place to provide clinical, educational, emotional and health support for the children. This creates a holistic approach and promotes continuity of care across different settings.

Staff adopt a nurturing and supportive approach to caring for the children. Children say that they feel safe at the home because of the consistent care that they receive. Staff use creative methods to help the children to understand risks. Staff understand the importance of children feeling safe and secure before exploring their trauma or experiences. Additionally, staff are positive role models and help the children to develop an understanding of healthy relationships.

Staff use physical holds as a last resort to keep the child and others safe. Staff use the least restrictive physical hold. As a result, the number of physical interventions has decreased since the last inspection. Staff record how they have had to hold the child, and the staff and child involved benefit from talking and reflecting on what has happened. This helps the staff to consider triggers and alternative strategies that they could use. Most importantly, children are helped to understand why they were held.

Staff ensure that the physical environment of the home is safe for children. On the rare occasions that bedroom searches are carried out, staff do so with the child's permission or knowledge. This helps the child to see that their safety is paramount and that their private space is respected.

The registered manager and staff support children to live together. Any concerns of bullying are responded to and staff help the children to think about the effect of their behaviour in a respectful and non-shaming way. Children are encouraged to restore relationships with each other. As a result, children consider the outcome of their behaviour and develop empathy towards others.

Children thrive on receiving incentives, which promotes their positive behaviour in the home. Creative reward boards are a visual tool for the children, which helps them to feel involved in achieving their goals. One child proudly said that they have saved enough points to buy a computer console for their bedroom. This helps children to develop a sense of accomplishment.

Staff have regular discussions with the children about staying safe online. Additionally, staff take measures to ensure that the home's internet system is safe and secure. Children understand the importance of internet safety and why the safety measures are in place. This protects children from accessing information online that is not appropriate for their age.

Children rarely go missing from the home. If this happens, staff look for the missing child, using a coordinated approach. This helps to ensure that the child is returned home quickly. The staff welcome the child back, which encourages the child to talk about the time that they have been away. Children also have the opportunity to speak to an impartial person. However, staff do not always receive the outcome of these interviews. This limits opportunities to identify why the child went missing so that staff can prevent further incidents occurring.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager has the highest expectations for children's achievements and demonstrates a commitment to raising the standards and improving the care that the children receive. The registered manager welcomes oversight and scrutiny from the senior leadership team. This supports the manager to make continued developments in the home.

The children receive care from a predictable and stable staff team. The staff work cohesively as a team. As a result, children benefit from the harmonious atmosphere this creates in the home.

The registered manager follows safer recruitment practices. This helps to ensure that the adults working with the children are appropriate and safe. New staff members are supported by the provider's academy to complete their induction and mandatory training. Since the last inspection, the number of staff who hold a relevant qualification has increased. This strengthens the quality of care that the children receive.

The registered manager and staff have good working relationships with people in the children's networks. Regular communication with professionals and the children's families helps staff to learn about past events that may affect the children's behaviour or emotional well-being. This means that staff can respond quickly to support the children.

Staff say that they are supported by the leadership team. The registered manager recognises staff's potential, and staff have the opportunity to progress to more senior positions. Staff receive regular supervision to improve their practice and to support their own learning. Additionally, staff attend meetings with the home's clinical team. These help staff to reflect on their practice and adapt to children's changing needs. As a result, children receive care from staff who adopt a therapeutic and nurturing approach.

The registered manager uses audits and monitoring tools to improve standards in the home. However, the audit tools have not identified that the children's placement plans have not been updated. This hinders staff's ability to follow children's current plans. Additionally, although children's risk assessments and behaviour support plans are reviewed and updated, it is not possible to see the author of the changes. This limits the registered manager's oversight to address any shortfalls in the recording.

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 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— use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(h))	1 October 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that case records are kept up to date and are signed and dated by the author of each entry. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 14.3)
- The registered person should challenge the placing authority and other relevant persons when they are not providing the input and services needed to meet a child's needs during their time in the home. This particularly relates to personal education plans and return home interviews. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 12, paragraph 2.8)
- The registered person should ensure that all areas of the home, including children's bedrooms, are clean and regularly maintained to provide a homely and nurturing environment. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.6)

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: 2615005

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

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

Responsible individual: Natalie Bennett

Registered manager: Gemma Winlow

Inspector

Cat Makel, Social Care Inspector

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