

2615005

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

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 and accommodation for up to seven children who may have emotional and/or social difficulties. Children who live in this home also attend one of the provider's independent schools.

The home and manager were registered with Ofsted on 22 December 2020.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

A monitoring visit was carried out on 25 February 2021. There were no serious or widespread concerns found. The report is available on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 20 to 21 September 2021

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: 25 February 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
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Not applicable		
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Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children have a positive experience of living in this home. Children have good relationships with the staff and can identify staff members who they trust and can talk to about any worries. The staff know the children well. They show the children that they care about them, by listening and engaging them every day. The inspector observed children laughing with staff, talking about their day at school and enjoying a hug. A social worker said, '[child] describes the staff as his family.'

The home is spacious and well maintained. It is furnished to a good standard, which makes it feel homely. The large communal spaces enable all of the children and staff to spend time together as a group. There is also space for the children to have privacy or quiet time, where they can complete homework and intervention tasks with staff. This helps children to be comfortable in their home.

Children benefit from a structured routine. Staff are in tune with the children's needs and provide them with reassurance and information about the day ahead. Staff provide the children with extra support when they need it. This reduces children's anxieties, helps them to overcome any challenges and helps children to enjoy their day.

Children are encouraged to develop good personal hygiene and maintain a healthy, balanced diet. Children contribute to the weekly menu and sit together each day to enjoy family meals. Staff support the children to follow advice from health professionals, for example taking prescribed medication. The children also benefit from the staff talking to them about things which are harmful to children's health, for example tobacco. This helps children to make positive choices about their health.

Children attend school and are making progress. For some children, their attendance has significantly improved. Daily communication takes place between the staff and education professionals and the children's attainment is closely monitored. Where necessary, children receive additional support to help them learn.

Children enjoy a range of activities at the home and in the community. The staff support the children to follow their individual interests and hobbies, irrespective of where the activities are. For one child, this has led to them becoming a public service volunteer. Staff also help the children to try new experiences, for example attending birthday parties, festive celebrations, and clubs. One club leader was complimentary about the support that a child receives from the staff to join in, and the difference this has made to the child's life.

Children's views and opinions are valued. Through regular house meetings, children talk with each other about living in the home, making suggestions about what they like or would change. The manager reviews the children's comments and listens to

their feedback. In addition, the children are supported to access an advocate when this is needed. This helps children influence their day-to-day lives.

The staff help the children to remember fun times, by taking some photographs of children enjoying activities. However, the staff do not complete life story work or create memory books for the children. This means that children have fewer opportunities to explore their past and the link to their present.

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

Before children move into the home, the manager considers the child's needs, vulnerabilities and individual risks. Using the information, she assesses the impact that new children may have on those children already living in the home and puts plans and strategies in place. This helps the staff to understand and meet the individual and group needs of the children appropriately.

Risks to the children have reduced. The staff have an excellent understanding of the children's vulnerabilities and the strategies which must be used to meet the children's needs. Staff share information with each other and work together to manage the risks. This helps to keep children increasingly safe.

Children are supported to be safer in the community. Staff provide the children with information and advice on how to be safe in and out of the home. This includes using public transport and road safety. In addition, staff check who the child is with and where they are. This means that the children learn ways to keep themselves safe.

The number of missing from home incidents has reduced. When children are missing from the home, staff take effective action. They follow protocols, which include looking for the child and informing relevant professionals, who can also help in the search. The manager ensures that each incident is critically reviewed, and changes are made to avoid future occurrence.

The staff manage the children's behaviour well. Each child follows a personalised incentive plan which enables them to earn rewards for good behaviour. Children get involved in choosing their rewards, and every day their progress is recorded. This means that the children can track their behaviour and see the improvements that they are making in meeting their targets. This helps children to develop a sense of pride about their positive behaviour.

Physical intervention is only used as a last resort to keep the children safe. If an incident does occur, a written record is completed by the staff which is reviewed and monitored by the manager. The numbers of restraints and emerging patterns are closely tracked, so that the staff can provide the children with additional support and intervention when necessary.

When complaints or allegations are made about the staff, thorough investigations take place. The manager prioritises the children's safety, ensuring that the

investigations follow safeguarding procedures and involve all the relevant professionals and agencies.

Children are encouraged to be kind and to develop positive relationships with each other. Staff do not tolerate bullying, which means that if incidents do occur between the children, staff address this quickly. The staff speak to the children to help them understand what has happened and the impact that their behaviour has had on other children. However, in one example, a bullying incident was not logged in accordance with the home's policy, but the intervention did take place.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has opened the home during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has created some challenges with the staffing and staff training. In addition, being new to the organisation herself, the manager has been on her own learning journey, increasing her understanding of the organisation and its policies. During this time, the manager and staff team have been supported by senior leaders in the organisation who provide ongoing advice, information and support.

There have been some changes to the staff team since the home first opened. Due to the mixture of experienced and inexperienced staff, the manager ensures that each shift is led by an experienced and qualified member of staff. Staff vacancies are covered by staff from the sister home. This ensures that there are sufficient staff to care for the children.

The children are looked after by nurturing and caring staff. With the support of the in-house therapeutic team, the staff understand the children's life experiences and the impact of trauma. Staff attend child-focused meetings with therapists, where they reflect on the children's therapeutic needs and identify what support is needed. This helps the staff to understand the children's emotional needs so that the staff are better equipped to care for the children.

The staff work together as a team. They speak positively about their work and they are proud to contribute to the children's lives and the progress that they make. They have good relationships with other professionals and agencies. Two social workers complimented the staff on the quality of information-sharing.

The manager uses the internal and external monitoring systems well to review the quality of care that the children receive. She uses the information to make changes in the home and to make improvements where these are needed. The manager is receptive to new ideas and is supported well by the senior leaders to bring about positive changes in the home.

Where children are not settling into the home, the manager and senior leaders take action to ensure that the child's plan is reviewed with the placing authority. Meanwhile, the manager ensures that the staff provide the children with additional support and, where necessary, increased levels of supervision.

Children's case records reflect the children's everyday lives and the work that the staff carry out with them. However, in some examples, the staff have not completed all the relevant documentation correctly. The manager acknowledged this shortfall and has a plan in place to address it.

Staff receive regular supervision and attend team meetings where they discuss practice developments, issues and the children's well-being and progress. Staff receive a comprehensive induction and receive regular refresher training. However, four out of the 13 staff have not completed training to meet the medical needs of one child. This shortfall had not been identified by the manager.

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 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— ensure that staff have the experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c))	22 December 2021

Recommendations

- The registered provider should ensure that the manager and staff recognise the importance of understanding who we are and where we come from is recognised in good social work practice, for example through undertaking life story work or other direct work. The registered provider is responsible for ensuring that the staff play a full role in work of this kind. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.14)
- The registered provider should proactively implement lessons learned and sustain good practice. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 55, paragraph 10.24)
- The registered provider should ensure that the staff are familiar with the home's policies on record-keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 14.3)
- The registered provider should ensure that the children's case records are kept up to date and signed and dated by the author of each entry. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 14.4)

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 Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Lee Riley

Registered manager: Paula Murtha

Inspector

Catherine Heron, Social Care Inspector

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