

2655761

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is one of several children's homes operated by a national provider. It is registered to provide care for up to eight children who may experience social and emotional difficulties. At the time of the inspection, six children were living at the home.

The provider operates a school on the same site as the home. The inspector only inspected the social care provision on this site.

The manager registered with Ofsted in November 2024.

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 October 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: 8 May 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
08/05/2024	Full	Good
07/06/2023	Full	Good
22/02/2023	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children live in a homely environment. They receive attentive and nurturing care from the staff in the home, who ensure that their support is carefully planned to be child centred and personalised. Staff have developed a deep understanding of each child's unique identity, lived experiences and family background. This understanding is integrated into their care planning documents and day-to-day interactions. The children's records offer valuable insights, providing guidance on how best to support their individual needs. This helps the children to consistently make good progress from their starting points.

Children are supported in developing positive relationships with staff at a pace that suits their individual personalities and communication needs. As a result, they feel settled and can reach out for support when needed. When children's behaviours indicate concern, staff are sensitive to the challenges that they face and gently encourage them to express their worries. This approach is a strength of the team and is evident in the planned conversations and daily discussions that encourage children to actively participate in decision-making. These interactions also provide opportunities for children to share their thoughts and feelings, helping to nurture trusting relationships, while sensitively addressing difficult topics. Consequently, children are making steady progress in all areas of their lives.

The staff work closely with the children to help them to get along well and show empathy and care towards each other. Staff are alert to any developing friction and quickly act to help children to resolve any issues. The positive relationships between children and staff help children to feel emotionally secure. Consequently, the children describe a home in which they feel cared for and safe.

Staff demonstrate a calm and natural approach when interacting with children. They use humour and positive communication to connect, and they reinforce boundaries and de-escalate situations when children are upset. Support for each child is continuously adjusted to find the most effective ways to work with them. Managers mentor and guide staff on navigating conflicts and establishing new boundaries with the children. This approach is having a positive impact and has reduced some children's risky behaviours effectively.

Children are encouraged to participate in a variety of activities designed to provide them with adventure and to create joyful memories. They are also supported in developing their interests and exploring new experiences that promote their health and well-being. Staff engage with the children about their preferences for holidays and activities and how they wish to celebrate special occasions, such as birthdays.

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 a consistency of approach.

Children are encouraged to explore their identities, promote inclusivity and express themselves as they wish. As a result, they feel safe discussing their identities with staff, who help them to understand their feelings. This approach contributes to the inclusive culture of the home.

The arrangements and plans for children moving into the home are robust and well thought through. Before children move into the home, the manager carefully assesses their needs and visits the child. They consider whether the staff have the skills to meet the child's needs and also take into account the needs of the children already living in the home.

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. The manager and staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and ensure that they work together with other professionals when required. Incidents are well managed, and necessary actions are taken to safeguard children effectively.

For children who may go missing, staff are proactive in following each child's missing-from-care protocol, and they try to locate and contact the children. On return, children are welcomed home, and staff reflect with them on how they can support them to prevent them from going missing again. An interview with the child's home local authority also takes place. As a result, missing episodes for some children have reduced.

Staff know how to respond to children when they are upset. They understand that behaviour is a form of communication. They know how to manage challenging behaviours, and they meet the children's needs effectively. If children become distressed or show behaviours that challenge, staff use individualised de-escalation strategies.

When physical intervention is used, it is as a last resort. Records of interventions are comprehensive, and staff demonstrate reflection and curiosity. Reflective conversations with children after incidents are effective; they help the children to explore their emotions, find different ways to communicate their feelings and increase their sense of safety, as well as helping to repair relationships. However, records of managers' oversight are not always completed in a timely manner, nor are they detailed enough to understand if the intervention was effective or what could be done differently to prevent future harm to the child and provide learning for the staff.

Staff and managers follow the organisation's safeguarding processes when responding to allegations made by children, and they work with external agencies effectively. Sensitive work is carried out with the child to help them to explore their emotions, find appropriate ways to communicate their feelings and increase their sense of safety.

Allegations made against staff are investigated and shared with relevant safeguarding professionals. However, on occasions, Ofsted has not been made aware of concerns as required by regulation.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Staff receive training in various areas, including specific training to support the children living at the home. Their knowledge is regularly updated through discussions in team meetings, child-focused meetings and supervision, allowing them to apply this learning effectively to their daily practice. This ensures that children are consistently cared for by experienced and well-informed staff.

The manager has built close partnerships with families and external professionals. She recognises the importance of working in partnership with families, therapists and health, education and social care professionals to meet children's needs. Professionals and families report good relationships with the staff and feel that they communicate with them regularly and effectively.

Staff have regular opportunities to discuss practice and strategies for supporting children. This is done through individual supervision sessions, team meetings and child-focused meetings with the clinical team. Staff say that this is supportive of their own well-being, it allows them to share any worries or concerns and is also effective for ensuring good team cohesion.

There is good state of morale and enthusiasm among the staff team. Staff talk positively about the support and supervision that they receive. They say that they feel valued, they have grown in confidence, and their knowledge has improved. Staff value the support, praise and thanks that they receive from 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 registered person must notify HMCI and each other relevant person without delay if— there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there. (Regulation 40 (4)(c))	9 October 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that that all restraints and incidents are evaluated in a timely manner to determine their effectiveness, any follow-up action required and learning that can be put into practice. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)

Information about this inspection

The inspector has 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: 2655761

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: Sandra Curley

Inspector

Sharron Dormand, Social Care Inspector

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