

2680522

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is part of a national organisation. The home is registered to provide care for up to eight children. At the time of this inspection, five children were living at the home.

This home is on the same site as a school and two other children's homes that are all part of the same organisation. The inspectors only inspected the social care provision of this home on this site. The other two children's homes on the same site were not part of this inspection.

The manager registered with Ofsted in June 2024.

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 June 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	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 5 November 2024

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
05/11/2024	Full	Requires improvement to be good
06/02/2024	Full	Good
04/01/2023	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

All five children living at this home were seen and spoken with as part of the inspection.

The experiences of children living at this home have been mixed. One child has moved out since the last inspection as staff were not able to consistently meet their needs alongside those of the other children living here. Towards the end of this child's time at the home, there were an increased number of significant incidents. This unsettled period in the home impacted negatively on all the children living in the home and on staff morale.

Managers recognised that this child's needs could not be met at the home and the decision was made for the child to move out. Since this point, there has been a reduction in the number of incidents and restraints. Staff recognise the improvements that have been made to the quality of care over the past few months.

Children continue to find living with peers difficult at times. Leaders and managers are aware of this as an area for development and some appropriate work is being done to address this with the children.

Staff working at this home generally build positive and nurturing relationships with children. Interactions between staff and children are friendly, positive and light-hearted. Staff speak warmly about children and are proud of their progress and achievements. Staff create memory books to help children understand the progress they have made and the positive experiences they have shared. However, at times, the language used in these documents is not consistently child friendly.

Children have made good progress in some areas. For example, one child previously found it difficult to attend school. With support from staff, their attendance and engagement in their learning have improved significantly. Another child is currently sitting their GCSE exams. Children are well supported to develop their independence skills and receive good-quality support to obtain work experience and opportunities through the organisation's mentoring scheme.

The home environment is mostly clean, tidy and nicely furnished. Children have been supported to personalise their bedrooms and have helped to design the decor – from the colour of the walls to lots of toys, teddies and gaming stations.

One bedroom, which is not currently being used, has an ongoing issue with drainage in the en-suite bathroom. As a result, this room has a strong, unpleasant smell and is not currently suitable for children. The registered manager has advised that work is currently being done to investigate and address the source of this issue.

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

Some vulnerabilities were identified in how well children are helped and protected. These vulnerabilities are related to the oversight of leaders and managers rather than serious failings impacting the safety of children.

Significant safeguarding concerns are responded to appropriately, with relevant procedures and processes followed. Leaders and managers work with external safeguarding partners and take appropriate action to ensure children are safe.

The relationships that staff have with children are important to helping them stay safe. Staff have a good understanding of each child's specific needs and the strategies in place to support them. When children are upset or angry, staff try to support them in line with their care plans. For one child, this has meant they are now more able to verbally express when they are having difficult feelings and staff are able to support them to make positive choices.

Staff regularly have appropriate and open conversations with children about keeping themselves safe online and in the community. However, when significant discussions have taken place, it is not clear from records what follow-up actions have been agreed or what additional support has been provided to the child as a result.

There has been a reduction in the frequency of restraint and the number of incidents in the past six to eight weeks. However, records of restraint do not always accurately reflect what happened, and how children are supported before and after the incident.

Staff have a good understanding of the restorative nature of consequences and speak confidently about the use of 'natural consequences'. However, it is not always clear how the effectiveness of consequences is considered or reviewed or how children are helped to understand their purpose.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The home is run by a suitably qualified and experienced manager. She has a good understanding of individual children's needs and risks. She also understands the home's and staff team's areas of strength and development.

Leaders and managers acknowledged that previous difficulties and the recent unsettled period in the home had impacted on staff morale and on children's experiences. Managers have taken some action to stabilise the staff team and to address the shortfalls identified at the previous inspection.

Monitoring systems are in place, which managers use to track children's progress and to identify significant patterns and trends. Team meetings are used to good effect to reinforce expectations and to share learning and good practice. Supervision has previously not taken place consistently. At the time of the inspection, this had improved.

When incidents happen, staff are helped to reflect on their actions, identify learning and consider what they could do differently in the future. However, this is not always robust or consistent and records do not always demonstrate what follow-up actions have been taken.

Staff generally enjoy working at this home and report feeling well supported by managers. Staff are offered relevant training opportunities to help them to respond to children effectively. However, not all staff have completed the required training. Managers are taking action to address this.

Door alarms on children's bedroom doors have been used at night without rationale or justification. There is evidence that four of the five children currently living in the home have been subject to this level of monitoring at some point over the last four months. Leaders and managers reported that they were unaware that this restrictive practice was routinely being used by staff, and they were not able to explain why it was being used. The registered manager has acknowledged that this is a significant oversight and will be taking prompt action to address it.

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 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 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 feedback on the experiences of children, including complaints received and; use monitoring and review systems to make continuous improvements in the quality of care provided in the home. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(b) (2)(e)(f)(g)(i)(ii)(h))	31 July 2025
The registered person may only use devices for the monitoring or surveillance of children if—	3 July 2025

the monitoring or surveillance is for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children; the monitoring or surveillance is no more intrusive than necessary, having regard to the child's need for privacy. (Regulation 24 (1)(a)(d))	
The quality and purpose of care standard is that children receive care from staff who— understand the children's home's overall aims and the outcomes it seeks to achieve for children; use this understanding to deliver care that meets children's needs and supports them to fulfil their potential. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to— ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— meet the needs of each child. (Regulation 6 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c)(i)) In particular, the registered person should ensure that any issue regarding drainage in the home is properly resolved and that any recurring smell in bedrooms is properly and permanently addressed before any child moves into this room.	18 July 2025

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that information in children's records is recorded in a way that will be helpful to the child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, 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: 2680522

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

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

Responsible individual:

Registered manager: Hayley Lukaszewski

Inspectors

Janet Jauregui, Social Care Inspector

Martin Brown, Social Care Inspector

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