

SC475680

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is run by a private provider. It provides care for up to eight children who experience social and emotional difficulties and learning difficulties.

The home was registered with Ofsted in July 2016, and the manager registered in September 2022.

Six children were living in the home at the time of this inspection.

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 January 2026

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
---	--------------------

How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
---	-------------

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
---	-------------

The children's home provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the children's home contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people who need help, protection, and care.

Date of last inspection: 29 January 2025

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
29/01/2025	Full	Outstanding
06/06/2023	Full	Good
18/10/2022	Full	Good
26/10/2021	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children benefit from living in a caring and nurturing home. Children make excellent progress due to the consistently high standards of care provided by highly skilled and committed staff. One social worker said, 'Staff are natural and child focused in their approach.'

Children's moves in and out of the home are carefully planned and positive. The registered manager carefully considers how children's individual needs will be met. Managers and staff travel significant distances to visit children before they move into the home, this helps to establish relationships. Children's time spent living in the home is celebrated. Children stay in contact with staff after they move out of the home.

Children are making significant progress in their education from their starting points. Managers and staff work closely with education professionals to identify learning environments that support children's individual learning needs. This means children's educational outcomes have considerably improved.

Children are encouraged to pursue their hobbies and interests, and they attend a variety of different activities in the local community, including football and rugby games, attending youth club with friends, trampolining, gaming, and music. Staff are not risk-averse and support the children to have time away from the home with friends and family. This further enhances children's experiences and develops their independence skills.

Children's health needs are prioritised by staff. Staff proactively encourage and support children to attend all routine health appointments. Staff work closely alongside professionals and family members for one child in respect of their medical condition. This ensures that the child has the necessary medication and that they receive individualised support.

The managers and staff encourage the children to spend time with people who are important to them. Staff work closely with children's families, which is a considerable strength of staff. One family member said, 'We can't fault the manager and their communication with us.'

Staff understand the importance of supporting children to maintain and develop their cultural and religious beliefs. Managers, staff, and children spend time together learning about each other's heritage and culture. Following a day celebrating one child's heritage, the child said, 'I have had these dishes before. They remind me of my mum and auntie.' Diversity is celebrated in the home.

Children are supported to decorate their bedrooms to reflect their own interests and identities. This supports children to have a sense of belonging. However, some redecoration is needed around the home.

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

Children live in a very safe environment. Staff work closely with the providers therapist to create a place for the children to feel emotionally safe. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children. Staff speak about the children with enormous pride and work hard to understand and manage their individual vulnerabilities.

Relationships between staff and children are positive and are built on trust and affection. They provide a solid base for children to thrive. Due to the nature of the relationships, staff support children to manage their emotions and feelings effectively, including those that may result in conflict. One social worker said, 'My young person is open to staff engaging.'

Children have individual risk assessments that are consistently reviewed and updated by managers and staff. Staff have a comprehensive knowledge of children's risks and vulnerabilities and take time to talk to children and educate them about risk. This ensures that plans remain current and effective.

Staff are proactive when children go missing from home. Managers and staff search for children in a thorough way and liaise effectively with relevant professionals to ensure that children's individual needs are identified and supported. There are robust missing-from-care protocols in place, which are fully understood by staff.

It has been necessary for staff to physically intervene when children have displayed behaviours that could result in harm to themselves or others. Records of these incidents are thorough and demonstrate that holds are proportionate and appropriate. Detailed debriefs are completed, and this helps to prevent future incidents and ensure children's wellbeing.

Children's behaviour has significantly improved. Children benefit from a nurturing and structured environment where positive behaviour is actively promoted. Positive recognition and praise outweigh negative consequences. The manager evaluates consequences, ensuring that consequences are proportionate and restorative.

The recruitment of staff is comprehensive and ensures that all necessary background checks are conducted. This means that the adults caring for the children are safe to do so.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The home is managed by a dedicated, caring, and ambitious manager, who advocates very well for the children. The manager has completed a leadership and management

qualification. The manager ensures that he is present in the home and accessible to staff and children. The manager speaks about the children with warmth and enthusiasm.

The members of the stable and settled staff team promote consistency and strong attachments for children. One member of staff said, 'The children clearly thrive in an atmosphere where they feel valued, supported and cared for with consistency and compassion.'

Children's records are well organised, up to date and detailed. The records show children's achievements and experiences. This information demonstrates the significant and continued progress that children make living in this home. The children's records capture their views consistently and their voice comes to life.

The members of the management and staff team are committed to achieving the best outcomes for children. They ensure that children receive a high level of care that meets their individual needs. The manager recognises the importance of the staff's need to feel valued, trusted and listened to. One member of staff said, 'The management are amazing. They are accommodating ... flexible. There is always an answer. Nothing is too much trouble.'

The manager has a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the home. The manager has close oversight of children's progress and any changes needed. Internal and external monitoring of the home are effective.

There is good multi-agency working. The manager and staff maintain excellent levels of communication with other professionals. One social worker said, 'Communication is excellent with the staff they tell me everything that's going on.'

Staff team meetings are regular and effective and have direct links to research to help support and guide practice. Staff also attend child-focused meetings with professionals who are involved with children. They focus on children's wellbeing and progress. The therapist said, 'Staff will respond to the suggestions and follow them through immediately.'

Staff receive ongoing support, supervision and constant guidance from leaders and managers. Annual appraisals are completed, although they could be further enhanced with feedback from other professionals who have worked with the staff member over the year, colleagues and children living at the home.

The management team, staff and children can clearly demonstrate the positive impact that living in the home has had on enhancing the children's lives. One family member said, 'The staff have been brilliant and changed [name of child's] life for the better.'

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the fabric of the home is well maintained. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 15, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that appraisals consider, where reasonable and practical, the views of other professionals who have worked with the staff member over the year, colleagues, and children in the home's care. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 61, paragraph 13.5)

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: SC475680

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

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

Responsible individual: Natalie Bennett

Registered manager: James Pennington

Inspectors

Stacey Ilaboya, Social Care Inspector
Debbie Dawson, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding, and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2026