

SC475689

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

The home was registered with Ofsted in 2014 and is owned by a private provider. It offers care for up to 6 children with learning disabilities. At the time of this inspection, 5 children were living at the home.

The home can provide ongoing care for children when they reach 18 until they complete their education. However, it must then reduce the number of children accordingly.

The manager registered with Ofsted in 2020 and is suitably qualified and experienced.

The registered provider has recently appointed a new responsible individual, and we are currently checking this person has the relevant capacity, experience and skills to carry out the role.

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 May 2026

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: 9 February 2026

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
09/02/2026	Full	Requires improvement to be good
21/01/2025	Full	Good
05/03/2024	Full	Good
01/02/2023	Full	Outstanding

Summary of findings

The home provides a nurturing, family-style environment where children's individual needs are clearly understood and consistently met through thoughtful planning, strong relationships and supportive care. Staff embed learning from previous shortfalls and show confidence in responding to risks and promoting positive outcomes in health, education and family contact.

Children feel settled, valued and safe and are supported to make progress at their own pace. Risk management is generally effective, with improved practice evident, although risk assessments require updating to fully reflect children's needs.

Leadership is strong. The registered manager is committed to children's development, with a clear, child-centred vision and supportive culture for staff, though some recording inconsistencies and weaknesses in independent oversight slightly limit overall effectiveness.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children benefit from warm, positive relationships with staff, which are echoed in feedback from children, staff and professionals. All children said that staff are what makes their home great.

Staff create a family environment for children. Each room is personalised, with photos of family and items that are important to them. This helps children to have a sense of belonging.

Children are registered with health professionals. One child has specific dietary needs and allergies, some of which were unknown until the provider identified a specialist assessment. These are included in the child's plan, which has resulted in significant changes to the home environment to ensure safety and care when preparing meals.

Children are attending education and making progress. When children have had difficulties in school, staff have worked with the local authority and education to find alternative learning opportunities. This has supported each child to access learning while taking into account their specific needs.

Staff support children through regular key work, helping them to form positive relationships with their peers. This includes therapeutic support through the provider's therapist and helps children to remain safe and learn about behaviours that could negatively impact on them or others.

Children feel valued because staff listen to their views. Staff use the views of children to support their participation in a range of enjoyable activities that reflect their individual interests. This helps them explore and develop their hobbies.

Staff promote children's independence while recognising that some challenges may affect this. They provide consistent support and encouragement, helping each child to make progress in a way that reflects their individual needs and abilities relating to neurodiversity.

Children are supported to see family and friends regardless of distance. Children feel included by their family members, who have also said that staff make them feel like part of the family.

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

Staff understand the needs of children and their individual risks. They manage incidents well. This helps to keep children safe.

Staff have physically held children when they are at risk of harm. Incidents are short in duration. Staff hold children as a last resort. Due to continued learning through training, staff have used de-escalating techniques that have resulted in a reduction in the frequency of restraint being used to manage behaviour.

Children have risk assessments that outline their specific vulnerabilities. However, for one child, the risk of racial abuse was not included despite being noted in other plans. However, this is a current and recurring risk to the child, staff and the community.

Although recording in children's documents has improved, a requirement is reinstated to ensure that all known risks are consistently and accurately included in risk assessments.

Children who go missing from the home are supported to return safely. Missing-from-home protocols are up to date and managers ensure through team meetings that staff understand expectations, revisit safety plans and respond effectively, including reporting to the local authority.

Children receive follow-up welfare checks and report feeling safe, as staff support them and help them stay calm. This support helps children develop self-regulation skills and has led to a reduction in harmful behaviours.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager provides effective oversight and has addressed the shortfalls from the previous inspection. This has been with the support of a dedicated deputy manager. There is a strong leadership team, which drives progress through regular auditing that informs a workforce development plan.

The manager is ambitious. She creates a nurturing environment for children. Staff and partner agencies speak positively about the leadership and the family-style environment.

Staff prioritise a need to understand each child and how they can respond to their individual needs. This is reflected in the personalised care provided. Children benefit from a consistent and tailored approach to their care.

The registered manager provides staff with regular supervision, support and access to training and development opportunities. Staff value the manager's supportive approach and leadership. However, supervision records do not consistently include clear actions and timescales to measure progress.

The manager has plans that focus on improving children's experiences and staff practice. These plans support staff progression and career opportunities for learning. This helps to develop staff practice.

The manager and staff work collaboratively to improve practice and strengthen the care they provide for children.

Professionals provide positive feedback about the home. They highlight the commitment of staff and managers to providing children with good-quality care. Professionals comment on effective relationships between children and staff.

Visits from the independent visitor do not consistently identify actions. This raises concerns about the effectiveness of independent oversight and monitoring of progress.

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 protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that staff— assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child; help each child to understand how to keep safe; have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm; take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i)(ii)(iii)(vi)) The registered person must ensure that all risks, when identified, are clearly recorded in children's risk assessments and care plans and that any risks identified have control measures in place that staff implement. This specifically relates to one child's verbal racially inappropriate language.	30 June 2026
The registered person must ensure that an independent person visits the children's home at least once each month. When the independent person is carrying out a visit, the registered person must help the independent person— if they consent, to interview in private such of the children, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as the independent person requires; and	30 June 2026

to inspect the premises of the home and such of the home's records (except for a child's case records, unless the child and the child's placing authority consent) as the independent person requires.

A visit by the independent person to the home may be unannounced.

The independent person must produce a report about a visit ("the independent person's report") which sets out, in particular, the independent person's opinion as to whether—

children are effectively safeguarded; and

the conduct of the home promotes children's well-being.

The independent person's report may recommend actions that the registered person may take in relation to the home and timescales within which the registered person must consider whether or not to take those actions.

(Regulation 44 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3) (4)(a)(b) (5))

The registered person must ensure that the independent person produces a report that sets out whether children are safeguarded effectively and identifies actions to take to promote a safe quality of care for children.

Recommendation

- The registered person should have systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional that allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. Actions set must include measurable timescales to enable review of progress and completion. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2)

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: SC475689

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

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

Responsible individual: Post vacant

Registered manager: Diane Mellor

Inspector

Paul McKay-Smith, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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