

Children's homes inspection – Full

Inspection date	15/12/2016
Unique reference number	SC475697
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Witherslack Group Ltd
Registered provider address	Witherslack Group, Lupton Tower, Lupton, Carnforth LA6 2PR

Responsible individual	Marcella Bird
Registered manager	Post vacant
Inspectors	Jackie Line and Marie Cordingley

Inspection date	15/12/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC475697

Summary of findings

The children's home's provision is good because:

- Children and young people enjoy positive, reciprocal relationships with staff. This provides a platform from which they can make progress.
- A range of activities promotes children's and young people's individual interests and talents. Good leisure opportunities provide children and young people with different experiences and fun times. They also learn new skills and develop confidence.
- Children and young people receive a well-planned introduction to the home, and this helps to allay their fears and helps them to settle in.
- Staff actively promote children's and young people's health needs and this ensures that they enjoy good health and well-being.
- Most children and young people have good school attendance and make progress from their starting points. When children and young people encounter difficulties in education, staff liaise well with teachers and the placing authority to review what action needs to be taken. As a result, children and young people receive support to overcome the challenges they sometimes face.
- Staff support children and young people to manage their behaviour, which can sometimes be challenging, risky and unsafe. Clear boundaries and a consistent approach help to reduce behaviours that cause concern.
- Staff recognise and promote positive behaviour. Incentives and reward schemes promote children's and young people's sense of achievement and self-esteem.
- A robust response to safeguarding concerns protects children and young people from harm.
- The manager creates a positive ethos within the home, and an environment where children and young people feel safe and well cared for.
- Strong leadership ensures that this home is organised and managed effectively. The manager understands the strengths and needs of the service, and demonstrates an ongoing commitment to developing practice.
- Staff access regular training and so update their knowledge and skills. This means that they continue to meet the individual needs of children and young people.

To continue to improve, the home needs to:

- Improve the support provided to those children and young people who are approaching adulthood so that they are fully prepared for their transition to independence.
- Review and update risk assessments in response to events that occur. Furthermore, ensure that staff implement, in full, the strategies outlined in these documents to fully support and safeguard children and young people.
- Ensure that all staff receive regular supervision so that they can reflect on their well-being, performance and development in line with their individual needs.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person(s) meets the Care Standards Act 2000, 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
12: The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard, the registered person must ensure: (2)(a) that staff: (i) 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.	03/02/2017
14: The care planning standard In order to meet the care planning standard, the registered person must ensure: (2)(b) that arrangements are in place to: (iii) plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child's placing authority.	03/02/2017

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendation:

- Ensure that systems are in place so that all staff receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.2).

Full report

Information about this children's home

A private organisation operates this children's home. The service is registered to accommodate up to seven young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and learning disabilities.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
17/02/2016	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
21/10/2015	Full	Good
05/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
25/07/2014	Full	Adequate

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Children and young people receive a good standard of care that is planned in accordance with their individual needs. The care they receive helps them to make good progress in different aspects of their lives. They express contentment with their home life and speak highly of care workers. Their comments included, 'It's always nice and cosy here', and, 'I think this is a good place to live.' The manager carefully considers the needs of any child or young person before offering them a place at the home. New admissions are carefully managed to help ensure that the home is the right place for the prospective young person and that their needs can be properly met. Staff take time to ensure that newly admitted children and young people receive a well-planned introduction to the home. This gives them the opportunity to express any concerns they may have and helps them to feel comfortable in their new home. Helpful information is provided to children and young people in a format that is meaningful. The children's guide is available in several versions, which are suitable for different age ranges. Staff take time to personalise the document when it is provided to a new child or young person. This helps support their sense of belonging in the home. The manager ensures that children and young people are encouraged to express their views and opinions about their own care and the general running of the home. For example, all the children and young people were recently asked to give their ideas for the refurbishment of the games room. Young people's views about their own care are encouraged and acted upon. When appropriate, external advocates support children and young people to express their views and opinions. Children and young people enjoy positive relationships with their support staff and each other. The staff team is a stable one with little turnover. This means that young people receive their care from people who know them well and understand their needs. A social worker commented, 'X has developed good relationships and good friendships at the home.' Children's and young people's social and emotional development is strongly supported. Their care plans demonstrate that matters causing them concern or anxiety are recognised and addressed. Therapeutic work is led by specialists and supported by the home's staff day-to-day. Care workers know children and young people well and have a good understanding	

of their needs. Regular one-to-one sessions are carried out with children and young people, within which significant areas are discussed. Records of these sessions demonstrate that more care could be taken to ensure that the sessions cover all the presenting issues that are specified in children's and young people's care plans and risk assessments. This would help to ensure that children and young people get help, advice and information about issues that are important to them.

The manager and staff support children and young people to access healthcare when it is required. Staff are able to recognise when healthcare input is required and take prompt action to ensure that children and young people receive it. Staff work closely with healthcare professionals to ensure that their advice is followed day-to-day. Children's and young people's medication is managed well and any changes made by prescribers are carefully implemented. When staff have a query about prescribed medication they are unafraid to ask questions of relevant medical professionals. This helps to promote their good health and general well-being.

Staff support children's and young people's educational attainment. Close links between the home and schools attended by the children and young people ensure that there is regular communication and information sharing. This enables staff at the home to provide effective support, which helps children and young people achieve in education and obtain skills for their future. Furthermore, staff can now interpret the data provided in school reports, which helps them to understand children's and young people's attainment levels and academic progress.

Staff support children and young people to pursue their interests and take part in fulfilling activities. Some young people have recently started to enjoy a number of outdoor pursuits with staff, including fishing. One commented, 'I have learned to do fishing and I am really good at it.' Young people are able to take part in a range of leisure activities such as going to the cinema, football matches, music festivals and local events. This provides them with a variety of experiences and supports them to achieve and grow in confidence.

Staff encourage children and young people to develop some life skills. Programmes linking tasks, such as keeping bedrooms clean and tidy, are linked to rewards. The young people spoke very positively about this arrangement and said that they enjoyed earning their extra treats in this manner. However, staff do not provide enough support for older young people to assist them with their transition to adult life. As a result, young people are not fully equipped emotionally and practically for their next steps. Furthermore, plans for one young person remain unclear.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Children and young people are safe living in this home. Pictorial and easy-to-read guides ensure that children and young people know how to report concerns and who to. When they do raise concerns, managers take robust action. As a result, children and young people are listened to and cared about. Staff receive regular safeguarding training that enables them to recognise, respond to and report suspicions of abuse. Staff spoken to during the inspection demonstrated a good awareness of safeguarding procedures. Managers and staff respond quickly when concerns arise and liaise well with relevant partner agencies. Good safeguarding processes protect children and young people from harm. Some aspects of risk management are good. For example, managers carefully consider the impact of new young people on those who already live in the home. Well-detailed impact risk assessments contain relevant and factual information along with the measures in place to minimise any identified risks. Most young people's individual risk assessments provide sufficient information to guide staff in how to reduce and manage risk. This safeguards young people. One young person's risk assessment had not been updated to reflect a recent event when he was absent from the home without permission for a period of time. As a result, managers and staff had not reviewed and considered additional measures that could have been taken. For example, making a more prompt arrangement to see him at the address where he was thought to be staying, to confirm that he was safe and well. In addition, staff do not follow all the strategies identified in risk assessments, such as using key worker sessions to educate children and young people about some key topics. A recommendation made at the last inspection is now raised as a requirement to ensure that a consistently good approach to risk management is employed. Children and young people living in the home have a history of putting themselves, and sometimes others, at risk through their behaviour. Staff provide effective behaviour management and support. As a result, young people's risky and unsafe behaviours reduce. For example, a young person with a history of going missing no longer does so. Indeed, children and young people rarely go missing or absent, with just four such incidents since the last inspection. Some children and young people who can present very challenging behaviour have had longer periods without any incidents. Therefore, they have enjoyed more stability and this reflects the progress they have made. Clear boundaries and consistent support contribute to effective behaviour management. Managers review and revise consequences to ensure that they are	

balanced and considered. A system of praise and reward ensures that the focus is not solely on negative behaviour. Children and young people have responded really well to a new initiative known as the 'good deed tin'. They enjoy getting rewards for their good deeds and learn about the benefits of helping other people. This good practice is now being used in other homes within the organisation, such is the success of this simple but effective initiative. Positive reinforcement of good choices promotes positive behaviour in children and young people. This improves their lives and experiences.

Sometimes behaviour escalates and physical intervention is required to keep children, young people and staff safe from harm. Most children and young people rarely need to be restrained, with 85% of incidents that have occurred since the last inspection being attributed to just two young people. Records are up to date and properly kept. This provides data for monitoring and evaluation, which the manager does regularly. Managers, staff and young people reflect on any incident of restraint. There is a clear emphasis on learning lessons to try to prevent reoccurrence. This promotes children's and young people's safety and well-being.

Strong recruitment and selection procedures prevent unsuitable people from working with children and young people. Timely health and safety checks mean that children and young people live in a safe physical environment.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
Following the departure of the registered manager, a new manager has been appointed and is currently in the process of registering with Ofsted. Having previously been the deputy manager, he provides a good level of continuity for both staff and young people. The new manager is suitably qualified, having completed a level 5 award in leadership and management for young people's services. The manager is highly organised, efficient, available and approachable. He is very child-focused and promotes an ethos that is caring and supportive. The home is run in accordance with its statement of purpose, and managers and staff achieve the aims and objectives set out in this document. The home is well staffed by a competent and motivated team which delivers and maintains good standards of care to children and young people. As a result, children and young people receive support from staff who understand them well, they make progress, and overall have a positive experience of living in this home.	

Staff confirm that they are well supported. Records reflect that most staff receive regular supervision, and so have the opportunity to reflect on their practice and development. This has not occurred for two staff and a recommendation is raised to ensure that all staff receive supervision at sufficient intervals, in line with their individual needs.

All staff who were in post on 1 April 2014 have completed the level 3 qualification within the two-year timescale set in the regulations, and new staff are already enrolled on the course. Staff describe training opportunities as 'excellent'. All core training is up to date, and so staff refresh their knowledge and the skills required to meet the needs of children and young people in their care. The manager monitors staff training enabling him to identify and address any gaps. When additional training is required, this is facilitated. For example, in response to a particularly challenging period the manager organised additional training focused around one young person's needs. The training was designed to look at ways they could reduce the young person's anxieties and levels of confrontation. This had a positive impact and led to a reduction in incidents.

Staff champion specific key areas so that they remain high on everyone's agenda, for example the safe administration of medication. Consequently, individual staff develop different areas of competence and responsibility, which enhances their professional development. It also helps to maintain standards of care for children and young people.

Robust systems for internal and external monitoring promote children's and young people's safety and welfare. Reports reach Ofsted in a timely manner. The manager is thorough and evaluative in his oversight and, as a result, he is aware of the strengths and needs of the service and of the progress that children and young people are making. Monitoring informs development plans, and this demonstrates a commitment to driving improvements forward continually.

Managers forward notifications of serious incidents to Ofsted. These show that appropriate action is taken in full collaboration with relevant agencies when necessary, and strategies put in place to prevent reoccurrence.

Two requirements and one recommendation are raised following this inspection, to secure improvement.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection'.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of children looked after is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place. However, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service 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'.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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