

SC475697

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This private home is registered to provide care for up to seven children. The home cares for children who may have a range of social and emotional difficulties or learning disabilities.

The manager registered with Ofsted in February 2023.

Seven children were living at the home at the time of this inspection, all of whom were seen and spoken to.

Inspection dates: 30 and 31 January 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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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: 22 February 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
22/02/2023	Full	Good
22/03/2022	Full	Good
16/12/2019	Full	Good
10/07/2018	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children benefit from high-quality care provided by an extremely committed management and staff team. Aspirations are high for the children. As a result, the children make exceptional continued progress in all aspects of their lives. This is due to the remarkable individualised care and support provided to the children. This has made a significant difference to their lives and life chances.

Staff have built strong, positive and trusting relationships with the children. Staff listen to children and invest time in them. Staff are nurturing and care about children and offer a therapeutic approach to their care. This means children are able to express themselves and have their views, wishes and feelings heard and acted on.

Children are enormously positive about their safety and the care they receive. One child said, 'The manager changed everything and made things better. It's a really good house, it's a 10 out of 10. I've got lots of friends here and it is proper boss to have therapy.' This demonstrates that children develop a strong sense of permanence and belonging in this home.

Staff are excellent role models. They work extremely well with external partners and the home's own clinical team to ensure that consistency of care and support is provided to the children. This supports the children's emotional well-being and health and increases their emotional resilience and self-worth. This encourages children to talk about their worries, anxieties and past trauma.

Children make excellent progress in their education from their starting points, often when education has been a challenge. All children access full-time education, with remarkable attendance. This means children's educational and career prospects for the future have significantly improved.

Family time and friendships are very well supported and recognised as important by the staff team. The manager and staff have excellent relationships with family members and carers and staff actively support children in speaking to and visiting family or carers regularly. This supports children to keep in touch with people who are important to them and supports their sense of identity.

Children access a wide range of activities and are encouraged to explore their hobbies and interests. For example, one child attends army cadets, one child enjoys one-to-one boxing lessons and two children enjoy regular swimming sessions and have learned to swim since moving into the home. One child has built their own computer from scratch, with the help of staff.

Children are actively involved in their community, for example, participating in the village sports day, dog walking and raising money for charity. This further supports the children's sense of belonging and their place in the world.

The home offers lots of space inside and out. It is clean, tidy and homely. However, the children are unable to access the laundry facilities independently. This impacts on the children developing their independence skills in line with their age and abilities. Leaders and managers took immediate action during the inspection to address this.

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

Careful consideration is given to children moving in and out of the home. This results in exceptionally well-thought-out care plans and risk management plans. Children who move into the home settle well and children who move on from the home continue to flourish. One child who previously lived in the home said, 'I was out of touch with reality before I moved in; they helped me with that. Part of me doing so well now is due to learning major skills and staff supporting me to get into college. I would not change anything; it is a brilliant home.'

Managers and staff have a comprehensive understanding of the children's risks and vulnerabilities. Robust risk assessments and strategies are in place to guide staff to manage behaviours effectively and support the children. Positive behaviour support plans are in place for all children. The records for one child did not accurately capture historical behaviours, to inform subsequent planning. However, children are protected from harm due to the positive and exceptional changes they make, with input from the staff team. This means that children's risk-taking behaviours have reduced.

Children are extremely settled in the home. On one occasion, a child went missing from home. Staff took swift action and worked effectively with the police to support the child to return home safely. The child was spoken to about the risks of going missing from home and was offered an independent return home interview. Due to the swift action taken and discussion with staff, there have been no more missing-from-home incidents. This has ensured that the child remains safe.

Relationships between staff and children are strong and are based on mutual respect. They provide a solid foundation for the children to thrive. Due to the nature of the relationships in the home, staff are able to manage children's feelings effectively, including those that may result in conflict. This means children learn to identify and manage their feelings in a more acceptable way. Children are safer as a result of the excellent care and support the manager and staff provide to them.

On occasions, staff have had to physically hold children to manage behaviours. However, staff have acted in line with policy and procedures and the manager has deemed the holds to be necessary and proportionate to ensure everyone's safety. As

a consequence, the emergency services have not been required to support the staff in managing the children's behaviour in the home.

Bedroom door sensors are used for two children, for adequate safeguarding reasons. However, it is unclear if the managers and staff have an in-depth understanding of the reasons why such monitoring and surveillance may be used in the home.

Serious events have been notified to the regulator. However, there has been a short delay of a few days for three notifications. This impedes the oversight and scrutiny by the regulator.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager is inspirational, confident and ambitious, and advocates strongly for the children in his care. He leads an enthusiastic, highly motivated and committed staff team. Children are extremely fond of him, and this is reciprocated. Both the manager and the deputy manager demonstrate excellent leadership of the home and a strong commitment to meeting the children's needs.

All staff benefit from high-quality supervision and training, which promotes staff development and improves the care provided to the children. Staff receive an annual review of their performance. This incorporates self-reflection of their practice, which helps staff to develop resilience and work positively with children, regardless of how challenging the situation or circumstances are. However, the appraisals do not involve feedback from professionals who work alongside the member of staff or from the children they are caring for. This is a missed opportunity for the staff to further reflect on their practice.

The management team has a clear insight into the progress and development of the children. They regularly use research to inform and enhance the staff's practice. For example, the manager sourced research in relation to reducing the number of physical interventions used with children. As a result, the manager made changes to the staff's practice and aspects of the home environment. This had a positive impact on a child and there has been a significant reduction in the number of times staff have held the child.

Children benefit from a stable staff team, many of whom have worked in the home for a number of years. Staff feel valued and supported in their roles. One member of staff said, 'I have been proud to call myself a member of the [name of home] team. The managers lead the way with their high standards, setting examples and ensuring we as a team are aware of the expectations.'

One social worker said, 'Communication is really good. I will ask questions and they will clarify information with me. It is very effective.'

Children and staff benefit from the strong day-to-day presence of managers and their oversight of the home. The management team has an in-depth understanding

of the home's strengths and areas for development. They make effective use of internal and external monitoring to make sure that high standards of care practice are maintained.

The requirements and recommendations raised at the last inspection have been met.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that they review the statement of purpose and discuss with the children and staff the safeguarding reasons why bedroom door sensors may need to be used. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 16, paragraph 3.16)
- The registered person should ensure that appraisals of staff performance take into account, where reasonable and practical, the views of other professionals who have worked with the staff member over the year and of children in the home's care. ('Guide to the Children's Home 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: SC475697

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

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

Responsible individual: Martin Ellis

Registered manager: Mark Bruffell

Inspectors

Julie Elder, Social Care Inspector

Andrea Foreman, Social Care Inspector

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