

SC475706

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This home is owned and managed by a private company. It provides care for up to seven children who may experience social and/or emotional difficulties. Children who live in this home also attend the provider's independent school.

The manager registered with Ofsted in April 2019 and is suitably qualified.

The inspector observed all seven children who live in the home and spoke to three of them.

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 March 2023

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	outstanding
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 10 May 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
10/05/2021	Full	Outstanding
12/11/2019	Full	Good
06/11/2018	Full	Outstanding
12/12/2017	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children feel safe and like living at this home. One child said that the best thing is the trusting relationships that they have with the staff. One parent described the staff as 'a fantastic team', while a professional said that the staff should 'keep up the good work'. The inspector observed staff and children playing games of football and having snowball fights.

The home is decorated and furnished to a high standard. Children's bedrooms are personalised, and they are allowed pets if they wish. One child is caring for a pet snake in their bedroom. This helps the child to develop an understanding of caring responsibilities. Repairs are reported and dealt with quickly. One child has an 'anger board' in their room, to help them to safely express themselves. This has helped to reduce the risk of harm to the child.

Children make good progress with their education. Staff support those children who were not previously attending school to do so, and they now achieve a high attendance level. Some children have been successful in passing exams and obtaining qualifications. Staff support the children with their homework, and they have high aspirations for them. This in turn helps the children to be aspirational. One child who had disengaged from school is being particularly well supported. The child is now considering a career in the Armed Forces and plans to attend college to support their application. The support that the staff provide to the children improves the children's life opportunities.

The registered manager supports staff to understand the children's diverse needs. Children's choices about their identity are valued. This has helped one child to feel well supported and that their life choices are respected.

The children actively participate in local activities. They contribute directly to the community by volunteering at a local animal rescue shelter and by fundraising for charities. This helps the children to have a sense of belonging and a sense of pride in their local community.

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

Staff understand the risks that the children face. Staff communicate well with the police and the child's placing local authority to help to improve children's safety. Risk assessments are regularly updated and reviewed. This supports the staff to keep the children safe. When children's risks cannot be safely managed, the manager takes appropriate action to ensure that children can be cared for in a safe environment.

On one occasion, staff did not follow the provider's policy on the duties allocated to them in respect of checking that children's bedroom doors are closed. This resulted

in staff failing to ensure that two of the children's safety plans were followed to help to keep the children safe.

Consequences are rarely used to help the children to manage their behaviour. This is because of the positive relationships that the staff have developed with the children. When consequences are used, they are usually natural consequences and restorative in nature. This helps the children to learn how to manage their feelings safely.

Room searches are also rare. When they are required, they are proportionate to the known risks which children face. Staff help the children to understand that these actions are taken to promote their well-being.

Physical interventions are seldom. When they are used, children are rarely held. However, discussions between the staff involved in the hold and the relevant responsible person are not always carried out in the necessary time frames. This prevents the registered manager from addressing any practice issues in a timely way.

Staff follow the appropriate procedures to improve the children's safety when they go missing from the home. Professionals speak highly of the coordinated approach that the manager and the staff take. This approach helps to improve the safety of children who go missing from the home and who are at risk of child sexual exploitation.

The manager acts quickly when the children make complaints. Complaints are investigated thoroughly, and the children are informed of the outcome. Children are also consulted about whether they are satisfied with the outcome. This helps the children to feel listened to and taken seriously.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager is experienced and dedicated. He is committed to helping the children to make progress across all aspects of their lives. The manager is supported well by a deputy manager. They have both succeeded in balancing the difficult task of managing the home while developing good relationships with the children.

The stable and committed staff team feels well supported by the management team. The manager seeks to lead by example. His enthusiasm is reflected in the staff's practice and the pride that they have in their work.

The manager identifies training that is specific to the emerging needs of the children. This helps the staff to better support the children. On occasion, he has shared his knowledge from the training with the wider organisation. This helps to improve the staff's knowledge and contributes towards raising the standards of care that children receive.

The manager appropriately challenges poor practice and takes action to support the staff to improve. When the staff fail to implement the guidance provided, the manager follows the provider's disciplinary procedures. The manager shares the learning from these investigations and disseminates this across the team. This improves practice and the care provided to the children.

The manager has produced a children's guide. This helps the children to understand what they can expect in their new home. However, due to the different ages and stages of development of the children, the language used in this may not be understood. This may prevent some children from knowing how they can make a complaint.

The manager escalates requests for information when this is not forthcoming from a child's placing local authority. However, one request for a child's address who moved on from the home was not responded to by the child's social worker. This was not escalated to senior managers. This has prevented the manager from keeping an accurate record of where all children living in the home have moved on to.

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, 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— manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other; that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. (Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(iv)(b))	30 March 2023
The registered person must maintain records ("case records") for each child which— include the information and documents listed in Schedule 3 in relation to each child; are kept up to date. Specifically, the address, and the type of establishment or accommodation, to which the child is to go when the child ceases to be accommodated in the home. (Regulation 36 (1)(a)(b) Schedule 3 (b))	30 March 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all records of restraint are reviewed to provide the opportunity for amending practice. In particular, the manager should ensure that debriefs are consistently carried out within the required time frames. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)
- The registered person should ensure that the home produces a children's guide. The children's guide must be made available to all children when their placement in the home is agreed (or on arrival at the home if the placement is made in an

emergency) and must be age appropriate and provided in an accessible format. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 24, paragraph 14.21)

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: SC475706

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Registered provider address: Witherslack Group, Lupton Tower, Lupton,
Carnforth LA6 2PR

Responsible individual: Mark Jarvill

Registered manager: William Blades

Inspector

Julia Hagan, Social Care Inspector

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