

SC475706

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

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 is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to seven children who may have emotional and/or social difficulties. Children who live in this home also attend the provider's independent school.

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

Inspection dates: 10 to 11 May 2021

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	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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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.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

Date of last inspection: 12 November 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
12/11/2019	Full	Good
06/11/2018	Full	Outstanding
12/12/2017	Full	Outstanding
08/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The children living in this home are making excellent sustained progress from their starting points. This includes improved self-care, education, emotional well-being and relationships. Children are proud of themselves because they recognise the progress that they have made. A parent reflected on the time that their child has lived in the home and said, 'He's like a different child.' The care that children receive in this home makes a significant difference to them and their future outcomes.

Children benefit from excellent relationships with the staff. The manager and staff are in tune with the children's individual emotional well-being. They are sensitive and compassionate and notice changes in children's behaviour and mood. For one child, this has resulted in a significant reduction in self-harm. This means that children can depend on staff to provide them with help when needed and supports them to build trusting relationships.

Children are supported to be healthy, both physically and emotionally. The staff provide the children with nutritious meals and promote the benefits of good sleep. They have conversations with children about self-care, for example personal hygiene and physical exercise. This helps the children to learn how to take care of themselves. The staff help the children to develop new routines and behaviours that promote healthy living. One child said that he has grown taller and that the condition of his skin has improved. This demonstrates that the children live healthy lifestyles.

Children are making continuous progress in education. For some children, this means that they are attending school after months of absence. Others are on target to achieve GCSEs. The staff and teachers work together and share information about each child so there is consistency between home and school. The staff provide the children with a routine at home, which helps the child prepare for the school day. This means that children are encouraged to value education, which enhances their learning and future opportunities.

The home is well maintained and spacious. There is a large outdoor area for children to enjoy and be with nature. The manager and staff help children to feel at home and encourage a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. The children's bedrooms are personalised, and their privacy is respected. This shows that the children live in a home which is comfortable and meets their needs.

Children who move into this home stay for several years. When it is time for them to leave, children receive a comprehensive plan to help them prepare for their move. This includes what will happen at each stage of the process, for example visiting their new home. An after-care package is put in place by staff, which aims for the

home to keep in touch with children and offer any support that they need. This results in children feeling valued and helps them to achieve stability in their lives.

Children are supported to enjoy time with people who are important to them. Staff help the children prepare for family time and go with them, when needed. Staff form positive relationships with children's relatives and act as a link to strengthen relationships between the child and their family. This increases family involvement in children's lives and enhances children's sense of identity.

Staff have supported children to cope with the impact of COVID-19 restrictions. Staff have been creative and helped children to celebrate important milestones, for example birthdays and passing exams. The staff have contributed to a memory book for children to look back on some fun things they experienced during the pandemic. With the relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions, children are attending more activities in the community, for example boxing and football club. This demonstrates that children are helped to enjoy themselves and have fun.

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

Children's individual risks and vulnerabilities have reduced. Staff have a good understanding of the children's needs, and this helps them to provide children with support. Children receive key-work sessions when they spend time talking with staff about different risks, for example the internet and exploitation. Staff use risk assessment tools to analysis risks and make decisions about what action they should take. This practice helps children to be increasingly safe.

Allegations against staff are rare. When they do happen, the manager takes effective action by investigating and consulting relevant professionals. He ensures that staff follow procedures, for example good record keeping and informing Ofsted. In this way, incidents are scrutinised, which helps to promote children's safety.

Children do not go missing from the home. The staff are vigilant and understand the procedure that must be followed if this was to occur. The staff have close working relationships with the police and follow the information-sharing protocols. In addition, each child has an information record on file, which details their description, where they spend time and who they spend time with. This information is regularly updated by staff and acts as a quick reference in the event that a child goes missing. This helps agencies respond quickly and reduce risks to the children.

Staff use a reward system to promote children's positive behaviours. Staff tailor rewards to children's individual goals and capabilities. Children know what staff expect of them and are involved in creating their individual targets. Each time a child achieves their goal, they are ready to set a new one. Reflecting on his experience, a child listed all his rewards and what they meant to him. This enables the children to achieve and builds their self-confidence.

Children benefit from regular therapy sessions provided by the in-house therapeutic team. This support is tailored to each child's individual needs. Children receive help

from staff to understand their life story and the reasons why they live in the home. This work is carried out at the child's pace and in consultation with their therapist. Staff provide the children with photo books, which help the children remember events in their lives. This helps children to know more about themselves and improve their sense of identity.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager and staff are committed and enthusiastic about providing children with high standards of care. They are flexible in the way that they work and will put in additional effort to be available for the child, for example by changing days of work to accompany children to important appointments. This means that children are fully supported by staff who know them well.

The staff work closely with the therapists and receive bespoke training and advice. This increases staff knowledge of the impact that trauma has on children's lives and helps them to understand how to meet the children's needs at home. This helps children recover from their previous life experiences.

The manager and deputy manager work together to provide good management oversight in the home. Staff receive regular supervision, which helps them reflect on their practice and highlight any issues. Regular team meetings provide staff with time together to discuss the children's well-being and identify emerging themes. This helps to ensure that children's needs are prioritised and any concerns identified.

New staff receive a thorough induction programme, which includes shadowing opportunities when they are able to meet the children. Staff have access to information about each child, such as risk assessments and care plans. This helps staff to understand the children's needs to prepare for working with them.

The manager considers staff development and training as essential to providing children with high standards of care. He invests his time in staff and supports them to grow and strengthen their practice. Staff said that they feel supported by the manager and their colleagues in the team. This helps to motivate staff and achieve a positive team culture.

The manager and staff have good relationships with the nearby children's homes, which are also owned by the provider. They use a buddy system to share relevant information about the area and provide staff cover if required. This close working relationship means that any unexpected staff shortages can be quickly addressed, without the use of agency staff. This helps to provide the children with consistency of care.

The manager encourages staff to ensure that children's records are up to date. He has systems in place, so records are checked for quality. However, the inspector found some gaps; for example, some documents were not signed and dated. This has an impact on the quality of information available to children should they wish to view their files.

The manager and staff have good relationships with professionals from other agencies. Professionals complimented the manager and staff team on their good communication and regular updates on children's well-being and progress. A social worker said, 'I'm over the moon with the care provided. I had to fight for [the child] to live at this home; I'm so pleased that I did. It's been brilliant for him.'

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

Recommendations

- The registered provider should ensure that case records are kept up to date, signed and dated by the author of each entry. ('Guide to the children's home regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.3)

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 Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Lee Riley

Registered manager: William Blades

Inspector

Catherine Heron, Social Care Inspector

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