

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 privately operated. It provides care for up to 7 children who may experience social and emotional difficulties.

The manager registered with Ofsted in April 2019.

Six children were living at the home at the time of the inspection. The inspector spoke with 4 of the children.

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 November 2025

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	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.

Date of last inspection: 23 October 2024

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
23/10/2024	Full	Outstanding
05/03/2024	Full	Outstanding
08/03/2023	Full	Good
10/05/2021	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children like living at the home. Their lives are enriched from all the fun things they do. Staff encourage children to try new hobbies and activities and actively support them when they show interest or talent. Some children are thriving in their chosen hobbies of horse riding and football. Significant importance is given to supporting all children's interests, such as their local football teams and interests in palaeontology. Children make friends through their hobbies, attend birthday parties, and spend time with their friends in the community.

Staff know the children exceptionally well. Their collaborative relationship with the therapeutic team is used to great effect in meeting the children's complex needs. Children make significant and sustained progress. Staff's nurturing approach provides children with emotional comfort during the most challenging times. High levels of support develop the children's sense of safety and confidence, resulting in children positively engaging in education and taking part in activities and charity events in the community. For some children, this is remarkable progress.

Managers and staff support children to attend and flourish in school. They work with education staff to fill identified gaps in the children's learning. One child is excelling with their reading and now has the confidence to read complex novels aloud in class. Furthermore, children's horizons are broadened and their opportunities enhanced by living at this home. Children pass their exams and make plans for their future careers. One child was supported to go to South Africa to undertake voluntary work as part of their college course.

Staff work with each child's social worker to plan regular meaningful family time. They supervise this when necessary, including in the family home, to allow children to have more natural time with their family. Additionally, children go on holidays with family and join group trips with friends. Parents' and family members' positive relationships with the managers and staff help children experience continuity in their care.

Children are fit and well, and staff encourage them to eat healthily and take regular exercise. Children attend all health appointments. When children require medical attention for an accident or illness, this is sought promptly to ensure that children have the help they need.

Children learn age-appropriate self-care skills; they learn to cook, clean, and do their own laundry. As children approach their time for moving on, staff ensure that they know how to manage money and budget. Staff hold farewell parties for children to celebrate their time at the home. They provide telephone support and visits for as

long as children need them. One child was supported with the army recruitment process and celebrated their 18th birthday with staff.

When children return to their parents' care, staff work with the child and their parents to support the move. One family was provided with food parcels by the home to assist them in welcoming their child home. When there is delay in planning for children to move, the manager escalates this appropriately.

The manager comprehensively assesses the suitability of children to live together. This involves consultation with all relevant professionals for a new child and the in-house therapeutic team. Staff understand the challenges that children might face when moving into a busy home. They build relationships quickly with the child and their families to help them settle. Furthermore, children receive information about the home in a format that meets their needs. One child found reading the children's guide before they visited the home to be reassuring, allaying many of their fears.

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

Children are safeguarded and their risks reduce due to the effective care and support they receive from staff. Managers ensure that staff understand children's risks through effective analysis of needs with a broad range of professionals. This leads to children having clear, regularly reviewed risk assessments aligned to their needs. Additionally, staff work with the therapeutic team to develop and review specialist risk assessments for children with a history of self-injury, ensuring that help remains responsive.

Well-trained staff skilfully help children to develop personal awareness. Staff support children to reflect on their emotions and understand how they affect their behaviour. They create with children their own 'safety plan on a page.' Children identify their triggers and learn what steps they need to take to avoid unwanted behaviours and overwhelming emotions.

Children do not go missing from the home. Proactive interventions promote their engagement in positive activities, including having friendships and regular family time. Staff understand what to do in situations that occur infrequently, due to regular refresher training and supervision discussions. When staff assess children to have low risk, they continue to have specific conversations with them to reinforce positive progress.

Staff consistently promote positive behaviour. Consequences that are used help children reflect on their actions and change their behaviour. When staff need to hold children for their safety, they record this clearly and management oversight is evident. Staff lead discussions with children to help them reflect and make safer choices. A member of the management team speaks with staff following a hold. Additionally, other members of the team contribute their observations to enable a whole-team reflection and learning from incidents.

Children trust the staff and go to them when they have worries or concerns. When there have been issues between children in the home, the manager quickly addresses these to prevent any reoccurrence and maintain the children's sense of safety.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager creates an atmosphere of positivity and aspiration for the children and staff. Staff are encouraged to access training to support their development. Staff feel well supported and comment positively on their work-life balance and opportunities for progression.

Effective monitoring and review processes have been enhanced by the introduction of a new recording system. This enables the manager to identify areas that require attention in staff practice, and improvements are made. When things do not go to plan, the manager carries out lessons learned exercises to reduce the likelihood of a reoccurrence. The manager uses the information from his own monitoring and the feedback from other sources to inform his action planning for the home.

Leaders and managers work well with professionals from other agencies. When there are delays or other agencies are not meeting the needs of the children, the manager challenges and escalates concerns appropriately so that children have the right support.

Practice-related supervision is regular, and staff's wellbeing is prioritised. Supervision discussions include a review of children's progress, and specific practice issues are reflected on. However, supervision records do not always reflect these conversations. Staff reflect as a team in handovers when there has been an incident to promote consistency in how they help children.

Managers recruit staff safely and provide new starters with a structured induction that prepares them well for the role. They ensure that staff have access to a wide range of training and development opportunities to improve the care they provide for the children. When children's needs change or a new child joins the home, the manager consults with the therapeutic team to explore the best way to provide the team with the skills it needs to care for them.

Staff record on children's files in a clear and informative way. However, not all records are written using language that would be accessible to the child.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that practice-related supervision records capture the conversation with staff to support continuous development and learning. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.3)
- The registered person should ensure that staff maintain clear and accurate records about each child that represent a significant contribution to their life history and are written in language that is accessible to the child. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.5)

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: SC475706

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

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

Responsible individual: Tracy Nicholson

Registered manager: William Blades

Inspector

Kirstie Sutherland, Social Care Inspector

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