

Children's home inspection – Full

Inspection date	14/02/2017
Unique reference number	SC475748
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered provider	Witherslack Group Limited
Registered provider address	Lupton Tower, Lupton, Carnforth LA6 2PR

Responsible individual	Marcella Bird
Registered manager	Post vacant
Inspector	Jackie Line

Previous inspection date	26/10/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Inadequate
Enforcement action since last inspection	The home was made subject to two compliance notices following the last inspection. A monitoring inspection was carried out on 16/12/16, at which both notices were deemed to have been met.
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

SC475748

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- The new leadership team is driving improvements forward and raising standards for young people.
- Dedicated, accessible and proactive managers support young people and staff extremely well.
- Managers and staff demonstrate resilience when working with young people through challenging times. This shows young people that staff care about them.
- Following a turbulent period, the home is now calm and stable. Young people recognise the positive changes that have taken place since the last inspection, and report being happy and safe.
- Restraint practice no longer involves the use of front ground techniques, which is a positive step that young people welcome.
- A robust response to safeguarding concerns protects young people from harm.
- When young people go missing, staff work diligently to look for them. The staff liaise effectively with partner agencies and escalate concerns when necessary. This helps to ensure that young people are found, and return safe and well.
- Young people receive individualised care. Very well-written placement plans capture young people's strengths, needs, personalities and interests. They show that staff know young people well.
- Young people learn to be independent, in line with their age and development. They contribute to plans about their next steps. As a result, young people have their say and are kept well informed.
- Managers and staff work closely with young people's teachers to ensure that they receive the right levels of support. This promotes young people's learning.
- A range of activities enable young people to learn new skills, develop friendships and have fun.
- Young people develop positive relationships with the staff and talk to them about their wishes and feelings. Because staff act on what young people say, young people feel listened to.
- The staff support individual contact arrangements so that young people can stay in touch with people who are important to them.

To continue to improve, the home needs to:

- Ensure that the administration and recording of medication is accurate, to promote safe practice and safe care.
- Ensure that all young people's bedrooms are decorated and maintained to a good standard and that the outside of the home is repainted.

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

Statutory requirement

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
23: Medicines Ensure that the registered person makes arrangements for the handling, recording, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of medicines received into the children's home. (Regulation 23(1))	17/03/2017

Recommendation

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

- Ensure that staff meet children's basic day-to-day needs and physical necessities in the way that a good parent would, recognising that many children in residential care have experienced environments where these needs have not been consistently met – doing so is an important aspect of demonstrating that the staff care for the child and value them as an individual. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 15, paragraph 3.7)

This is specifically in relation to ensuring that all young people's bedrooms are decorated and maintained to a good standard, and that the outside of the home is repainted.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for seven children with learning difficulties, and or emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is operated by a private provider.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/10/2016	Full	Inadequate
05/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
01/10/2015	Full	Good
10/03/2015	Interim	Sustained effectiveness

Inspection judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
Managers and staff have worked hard to rebuild trusting and positive relationships with young people. Different methods of consultation allow young people to have their say and feel listened to. A social worker said, '[Managers and staff] seem to be listening to X and engaging in what he wants.' Young people and staff have talked openly about what has needed to change in the home and why. As a result, young people have been able to talk about how they feel. Because of honest communication and a willingness to listen, staff and young people have moved forward together. Young people develop empathy and genuine care for staff. This shows that young people enjoy positive and reciprocal relationships with the staff. Following an unsettled period, young people are now enjoying a stable and calm home environment. Young people recognise the positive changes that have been made over recent months and say that they are enjoying life in the home again. A young person said, 'I am feeling much happier in myself. I am happy with how the home is now. It is back to how it was, and is settled again and nice.' The staff support young people with their education. Well thought out reintegration plans help young people who have spent time out of formal education to settle back into school. When young people encounter difficulties in school, staff liaise well with teachers to ensure that young people's individual learning needs are met. Young people recognise the progress that they are making. For example, one young person can see that she is getting better at spelling and maths. Young people's health needs are largely met. Young people's health plans reflect their individual needs. All young people have received an annual health assessment and staff are working through the recommendations made in these. Most young people attend routine and specialist health appointments. One young person is not currently registered with a dentist, because he failed to attend a previous appointment. However, the manager is liaising with the children's looked after nurse to address this issue. In the meantime, the young person can access emergency dental care, should he need to. Young people enjoy home-cooked meals and regular exercise, which promotes a healthy lifestyle. The staff are supporting a young person who smokes to give up. Young people engage with in-house therapy provision and most receive specialist support, when necessary, to address their emotional and behavioural needs. One young person requires an assessment by the child and adult mental health service. Although a referral has been made, there is a long waiting list. This delay is outside the home's control, but managers are liaising with health professionals to try to	

address the problem. This shows that managers advocate for young people to ensure that young people's health needs are prioritised.

Shortfalls in the administration and recording of medication do not promote safe practice. For example, occasionally young people have not taken their medication, yet the reasons are not made clear in the records. Furthermore, staff do not countersign when records are amended or explain why this has been necessary.

Managers and staff respect young people's individuality. Individualised care is underpinned by well-written placement plans. These documents clearly outline young people's strengths, needs, personality and interests. This shows that they are written by staff who know the young people well. The staff treat young people as individuals and respect them, and this means that young people feel valued.

Young people develop independence in line with their age and needs. Managers and staff balance young people's need for independence with managing any potential risks that come with this. Young people contribute to plans about their next steps. As a result, young people have their say and understand the boundaries that are in place. One young person is particularly happy to have an internet-enabled mobile phone and to be able to spend time out in the community independently. Progressing young people's plans supports their development.

Staff support young people so that they can enjoy positive contact with their families and people who are important to them. Some young people have recently reconnected with family members, which is a positive development. Managers proactively liaise with young people's social workers so that arrangements can be reviewed if difficulties arise. This ensures that young people's contact with their family is safe and takes place only when this is agreed and in their best interests.

Young people enjoy a range of activities. These include the scouts, football, the gym, trampolining, golf and cooking. As a result, young people learn new skills and develop friendships while having fun. Furthermore, young people's participation reflects the progress that they have made. For example, a young person's independent reviewing officer said, 'X has made exceptional progress with regards to regulating her emotions and being able to participate in community activities.'

Young people are already planning their summer activities, which they hope will include holidays and music festivals. This shows that young people who have previously found it difficult to settle in are now beginning to invest in their home and show a commitment to remaining there.

Leaders and managers recognise when the home cannot safely meet the needs of young people. They make difficult but considered decisions to safeguard them. Two young people have moved on from the home. The staff worked hard to ensure that this was managed as positively as possible and in the best interests of the young people.

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
Young people say that they feel safe. This represents a change from the last inspection, when some young people said that they did not feel safe and that they did not feel listened to when they raised concerns. Leaders and managers have implemented changes to the complaints procedure and, as a result, this is more accessible to young people. Young people have complained and their complaints have been addressed. This shows that young people are more able to share their worries and are confident that they will be heard. Staff help young people to manage their behaviour, which is sometimes challenging. The inspector observed staff dealing with young people patiently and calmly, supporting them to make good choices about their behaviour. The manager has undertaken a review of consequences, and this has included young people's views and ideas. Involving young people helps them to think about how their behaviour impacts on themselves and other people. It also helps young people to take responsibility for their actions. Staff implement clear boundaries. This enables young people to feel safe and to know what is expected of them. Occasionally, situations escalate and physical intervention is required. Managers carefully monitor restraint practice to ensure that this is proportionate and safe. Front ground restraint techniques are no longer used by staff, and young people welcome this. Staff and young people receive debriefings from someone who was not involved, following an incident of restraint. This allows all parties to reflect on what happened and to raise any concerns that they may have. Furthermore, managers now adopt a 'lessons learned' approach to significant incidents. They look with staff at what has happened and how things may be done differently next time to prevent their recurrence. This safeguards young people and promotes their welfare. Staff identify and manage risk well. Good practice is underpinned by up-to-date risk assessments and support plans. These documents provide guidance to staff so that they know what to do. Staff receive safeguarding training. They say that they are confident to raise concerns with managers and do so. Managers respond promptly when safeguarding concerns arise. They liaise with placing authorities and the local authority designated officer to share information and seek guidance on how to proceed. Managers investigate allegations quickly and fairly, and they follow procedures. This protects young people from harm. When young people go missing, staff work extremely hard to look for them. For example, when a young person was missing for several weeks they worked tirelessly, searching different areas even when these were some considerable	

distance from the home. Managers liaised effectively with the police and partner agencies. They escalated their concerns when they felt that not enough was being done to secure the young person's return. This galvanised people into action. Good partnership working ensured that the young person was eventually found safe and well. On his return to the home, the young person received good support.

Staff remain alert to the dangers that the internet and social media pose to young people. Because of their vigilance, staff quickly identified a safeguarding concern. This was reported immediately and swift action was taken to minimise the risk of harm. Staff do talk to young people about how to keep safe online, and this work is ongoing.

Timely health and safety checks take place, so young people live in a safe physical environment.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good
Since the last inspection, a new manager has been appointed. He is suitably qualified and experienced, and is in the process of applying to register with Ofsted. The new manager brings fresh ideas, and is respected by young people and staff. Staff describe him as proactive and approachable, and young people say that the new manager 'listens and is great'. The manager has moved his office from the third floor to the ground floor. Staff and young people welcome this move, because they say that the manager is more accessible to them. Moreover, the manager is able to oversee day-to-day activities within the home more easily and is on hand to guide and support young people and staff when needed. Staff report feeling well supported with regular supervision. This is scheduled in advance so that they can prepare. Good supervision records ensure that both parties have a written account of what has been discussed. Effective supervision makes staff feel valued. It also enables them to focus on their practice and professional development. Staff keep up to date with the necessary skills and knowledge to meet young people's individual needs. Behaviour management and safeguarding training has been prioritised in recent months to help to bring about improvements to the standard of care afforded to young people. Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the needs of the service, and this is reflected in the training plans that they are currently devising for the year ahead. Changes to the staff team have been difficult for young people. However, they	

have talked about this with staff and managers, so understand why these changes needed to happen. Young people have largely welcomed new staff. They recognise the positive energy that these staff have brought with them. At times, resources have been stretched and staff have pulled together well to provide continuity for young people. Working together through challenging times reflects how committed the staff are to their role and to the young people. Successfully managing the home through a period of change also reflects strong leadership.

Managers carry out regular monitoring activities and are in the process of implementing new systems to improve practice further. Effective internal and external oversight promotes young people's safety and welfare. Staff complete young people's records to a high standard, and these reflect young people's progress and needs. Good organisational systems ensure that records are accessible and easily understood.

Managers and staff develop effective partnerships with other professional agencies. Placing authority social workers and independent reviewing officers report good communication, and are positive about the care afforded to young people. This collaborative working promotes young people's welfare.

Managers and staff largely maintain the home to a good standard, but this is not consistent throughout. For example, the standard of cleanliness in all young people's ensuite bathrooms is not good enough and one young person's bedroom requires redecorating. The paintwork on the external walls of the home is also in need of attention. Although plans are in place to address these issues, they are yet to be fully implemented.

Leaders and managers have addressed all seven requirements raised at the last inspection, together with two of the three recommendations that were also raised. This demonstrates that managers learn from inspection and drive improvements forward to progress young people's experiences and outcomes.

One requirement and one recommendation are raised following this inspection.

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 looked after children 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'.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It inspects services for looked after children and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2017