

SC475748

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for seven children who have learning difficulties and/or emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is operated by a private provider. The manager, who has six years' experience as a registered manager, is about to complete his first year as the registered manager of this home. He is suitably qualified, and he has been influential in the progress that the home has made since the last inspection.

Inspection dates: 21 and 25 June 2018

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: 24 October 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/10/2017	Full	Good
14/02/2017	Full	Good
26/10/2016	Full	Inadequate
05/02/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Young people are at different stages of their journey through the home. All placements are long term and stable. Overall, the quality and consistency of care have improved, and all young people are making outstanding progress in all areas of their lives.

At the last inspection, the home was judged as good. At that time, there was a relatively new management team and a staff team that had experienced many changes. Since then, the home has stabilised and moved forward. An inspirational manager, supported by a committed staff team, has established an environment where young people who have had previously poor life experiences, settle and thrive.

Young people receive excellent levels of care from an attentive and highly motivated staff team which has high aspirations for them. Plans, assessments of risk and coping strategies reflect young people's individuality. These documents are revised and updated regularly. The manager and his support staff possess the knowledge and skills to ensure that plans are underpinned by current evidence-based practice.

Apart from one young person who is in full-time employment, the other young people are in full-time education. All of them attend one of two schools operated by the organisation that runs the home.

School attendance levels are excellent. This is a considerable achievement, as many young people had rejected education for some time before being admitted to the home. This and the home's practices promote and supports each young person's education, which in turn contributes significantly to the excellent educational progress being achieved by young people.

The arrangements for meeting young people's physical and mental health needs are exceptional. Strong links with services delivering everyday healthcare are well established. Mental health practitioners and an assistant psychologist are also part of the staff team. The team, along with the local looked after children's nurse, has a pathway into more specialist services, which are available when required.

Young people live in an inclusive environment where they feel comfortable sharing their views and in making requests to and choices with staff. This is a home where young people are valued and listened to. Consultation levels are high and young people's views, where appropriate, help to shape the working practices of the home.

High staffing ratios and excellent transport arrangements enable young people to engage in inclusive activities in the local and surrounding communities. They make genuine choices about what they want to do, allowing them to develop their own interests and hobbies. Many of these interests are then carried forward beyond their transition from the children's home.

Young people live in a large home that is spacious, comfortable and homely. The standards of decor, fixtures and fittings are of a high quality. The strong relationships between young people and staff foster a happy atmosphere. Young people relax in their environment, accepting it as home. For example, bedrooms are personalised, and some young people keep pets. It is a home full of energy, activity and laughter.

The management, organisation and daily functioning of the home are totally child-focused. Young people's social mobility improves significantly as they develop greater independence. They are encouraged to take on responsibilities for themselves and this increases their independence, along with their personal and social development.

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

Risk assessment and risk management processes are of the highest quality. Despite young people being challenging and demanding on occasions, staff have the confidence and training that allows them to work supportively rather than punitively. Staff, supported by managers, are prepared to take planned and calculated risks to ensure that young people remain socially mobile, but at the same time remain safe.

Staff implement excellent behaviour management and safeguarding plans consistently. Clear safeguarding arrangements, underpinned by training which is refreshed regularly, protect young people. This is aided by the strong, professional relationships in place with external agencies that also have responsibilities to protect young people.

Challenges, confrontation and even crises are dealt with calmly and professionally. Young people are supported through difficult periods. Both management and care staff are prepared to go that extra mile to ensure that young people remain safe. This was exemplified during the inspection by the steps taken to find a young person who had gone missing.

Diligent planning, the implementation of strategies and the strong bonds built between staff and young people help to keep young people safe. The individual work undertaken with them, coupled with clear evaluation of any incident, provides young people with a greater insight to and understanding of how to remain safe.

Recruitment and staff clearance processes are of the highest standard. Longer-serving staff are rechecked regularly and visitors to the home are vetted appropriately. This ensures that young people meet adults who do not pose any known risk.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The vision, planned approach and high aspirations that the manager has for young people have been instrumental in the way that the home has moved forward since the last inspection. His detailed evaluation of the service provides the platform for continued future development.

Staff feel well supported and share the passion and enthusiasm shown by senior staff to

improve outcomes for young people. They subscribe fully to the ethos, culture and working practices that continue to develop within the home. This has generated a culture of high expectation, creating positive energy in the staff group, which then permeates around the home.

Supervision, appraisal and training programmes are active. This gives staff the skills, confidence and ability to manage the ever-changing and complex needs of the young people in their care. The manager is well supported by senior managers, who have a high presence in the home and get to know the young people well.

No breaches of regulation have been identified. The two recommendations raised at the last inspection have both been addressed positively. Alongside this, the manager has introduced new initiatives into the home, such as creating a new library, establishing key-worker planning meetings that link to supervision and introducing reading and spelling support structures for young people.

Effective partnership working with other professionals ensures that young people receive the services that they need. Positive responses received from other professionals evidence the excellent working partnerships in place.

A social worker reports: 'Communication levels are high. Boundaries have been put in place for him and he is thriving as a result of this.' A practice manager says: 'Joint working has allowed the social worker and staff in the home to look at and analyse patterns of behaviour. This has resulted in successful strategies being put into place.'

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and 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 whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC475748

Provision sub-type: children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Ltd

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

Responsible individual: Marcella Bird

Registered manager: Simon Barton

Inspector

Graham Robinson, social care inspector

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