

SC475748

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This is a private children's home registered to care for up to seven children. The home provides care for children who may have a range of social and emotional difficulties or special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The manager registered with Ofsted in April 2022. He is suitably experienced and qualified.

There were seven children living at the home at the time of this inspection.

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 February 2024

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: 28 February 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
28/02/2023	Full	Good
15/03/2022	Full	Good
21/01/2020	Full	Outstanding
21/06/2018	Full	Outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children make exceptional progress from their starting points. They have experienced difficult beginnings and have complex needs. Children and staff are supported by a therapist who knows the children extremely well. This ensures that children's needs and behaviours are understood by staff.

The home is welcoming, and the children's bedrooms capture their likes and interests. There are communal areas designed in response to consultation with the children, so they now have a gaming room. However, the addition of children's photographs and personal items in all areas of the home would give it a more homely feel.

All children attend education. Some children find attendance difficult, and staff work closely with them to promote their learning. Children are offered incentives for attending education and are supported to develop confidence in their abilities. One professional said, '[Name of child] has started to believe in herself; she is attending school, which demonstrates an increase in her confidence.'

Children are supported to develop their independence in a safe manner that is appropriate to their age and understanding. The time they spend alone outside of the home is carefully considered, and incrementally increased in accordance with their individual needs. Children are supported to keep their bedrooms tidy, and one child can cook their own evening meal.

Children's family links are valued and promoted, and staff complete life-story work with children sensitively to understand their experiences. The impact of life-story work is understood by staff. It gives children a safe space in which to learn about their life. This demonstrates that children's sense of identity is valued by the staff team.

The children enjoy a wide range of activities, inside and outside of the home. When children are reluctant to take part in activities, staff take the time to understand any root causes for this. This information then helps staff to support children to overcome any barriers and encourages children to participate at their own pace.

Children's emotional and physical health are promoted well. All children are registered with health services. Direct work to address the importance of good health takes place regularly, including discussions about sexual health and mindfulness.

Children's care is underpinned by relevant research, including attachment theory, which can be seen in the children's records. Practice is enhanced by the integral

work of the therapeutic service. This means that care is innovative and individualised.

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

There are consistent routines and boundaries in place for children, which are clearly stated in the children's records and observations of practice. This provides children with safe and consistent care.

Risk assessments are individualised and routinely updated to reflect incidents that increase risk and the progress made by children that reduces risk. Measures put in place to reduce risk are understood by children, which enables them to develop their own strategies to stay safe.

Each child has a unique, comprehensive positive behaviour support plan. The plans clearly set out children's behaviours, and strategies to de-escalate these at times of crisis. There are regular meetings with the home's therapist to carefully consider any changes in the behaviour of children and contributory factors to this.

Children are physically held as a last resort to keep them safe. Staff hold children in conjunction with the home's policies and procedures. Children and staff have the opportunity to discuss incidents of physical intervention. For children, this is a chance to change and influence their plans by talking about what was effective and what was unhelpful.

Children feel safe and can talk to staff, including the home's therapist, about any worries or concerns. An independent reviewing officer said, '[Name of child] is safe and happy; they have built really great relationships.'

Children rarely go missing from the home. However, staff understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to managing missing-from-home incidents. Staff work with the police and other relevant people to secure children's safe return to the home when they do go missing. The reasons why children go missing from the home are understood by staff, and this helps children to openly talk about incidents.

Allegations made by children receive a prompt, robust response that prioritises their safety. Allegations are shared with the relevant professionals, including the police and the local authority designated officer. Children are given the opportunity to talk to an advocate. Allegation records include information about all stages of the investigation, the outcome and any learning.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The manager is very experienced and suitably qualified. He has an extensive understanding of each child's history, behaviours and permanency planning. He is aspirational for them all in terms of their future care and achievements.

The manager responds to children's complaints swiftly by holding discussions with all involved and reviewing any related records. The outcome of complaints is shared verbally and followed up in writing.

Staff feel supported and valued by the manager. Supervision takes place regularly. It is reflective and focuses on children's progress and the health and well-being of staff. The training and development needs of staff are reviewed, which assures the manager that staff are well equipped to respond to children's needs.

Team meetings take place regularly and are well attended by staff and the home's therapist. They are an opportunity for the manager, staff and therapist to review children's progress and consider research to improve practice. One member of staff said, 'We talk a lot about the care we offer and the impact we have to make sure it is the best.'

The manager has excellent oversight and monitoring of children's records, which identify strengths and areas for development. He uses the information available to develop progress summaries for each child. The summaries give a clear overview of the significant progress that children make and the areas that require ongoing support.

All of the requirements raised at the previous inspection have been met.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that records of restraint enable the manager and staff to review the use of control, discipline and restraint to identify effective practice and respond promptly where any issues or trends of concern emerge. The registered person should ensure that records include the name and signature of those completing them. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 49, paragraph 9.59)
- The registered person should ensure that the home environment, including shared living spaces, reflects the children who live there. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 33 paragraph 7.3)

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: SC475748

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

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

Responsible individual: Martin Ellis

Registered manager: Daniel Arnold

Inspector

Sarah Jackson, Social Care Inspector

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