

# SC475723

Registered provider: Witherslack Group Limited

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this children's home

The home is registered to provide therapeutic care for up to nine children who may experience social and emotional difficulties. The home is privately owned.

The home registered with Ofsted in 2014. The manager registered with Ofsted in April 2022.

### Inspection dates: 12 and 13 November 2024

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account** **outstanding**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

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:** 13 June 2023

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** requires improvement to be good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/06/2023	Full	Requires improvement to be good
26/07/2022	Full	Good
12/10/2021	Full	Good
22/10/2019	Full	Requires improvement to be good

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

Children experience excellent individualised care that gives them emotional support, high levels of warmth and a sense of belonging. The positive relationships and quality of care the registered manager and staff provide enable children to make significant and sustained progress. This alters children's life chances and improves their outcomes.

Staff work extremely well with external partners and the therapeutic team to ensure that consistency of care and support is provided to the children. Careful consideration is given to children moving in and out of the home. This results in exceptionally well-planned and thought-out moves. Ultimately, children who move into the home settle well and children who move on from the home have every opportunity to flourish.

Children attend full-time education on site and have 100% attendance. This is a remarkable difference from their starting points. Formal and informal education is promoted extremely well. Children learn about different topics at home, such as knife crime, Pride, climate change, World Book Day, and different cultures around the world. Children are helped to develop their independence skills. This gives children the skills to be able to develop their knowledge about the world they are growing up in.

Children's health needs are prioritised. The children are registered with local health services and attend regular appointments. The manager is proactive when identifying children's needs and advocates tirelessly to get the correct support for them. One child has been taken off their medication for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The child said in their direct work session, 'I've changed since I have come off my morning medication. I'm more me.' Staff have made every effort to provide the support for this child to thrive by providing excellent routines to promote their individual needs.

One child is supported to attend a national group for children in care and advocate for change. They are also involved in the provider's internal working group run across all their homes for children to have their say and influence change.

Family time and friendships are well supported and recognised as important by staff. The manager and staff have excellent relationships with family members and friends. Staff actively support children in speaking to, visiting, and having family visiting the home regularly. This supports children to keep in touch with the people who are important to them and supports their sense of identity.

Children access a wide range of activities at the home and in the community. For example, they have computers, games consoles, Lego, and books. Outside, there is a large climbing frame and a multi-use games pitch for football, basketball, tennis, and netball. One child goes to a wrestling club and took part in a wrestling show attended by other children and staff from the home. Children are actively involved in their

community, for example, attending the coffee morning at the local care home and raising money for a local foodbank by doing the community fun run.

The manager and staff have high aspirations for the children in their care. They actively model positive behaviours and attitudes and they challenge negative behaviours effectively using a therapeutic approach. Positive feedback was received from a social worker who said, 'They have been the making of [name of child]. They are amazing, communication is excellent, they always check things. I couldn't have wished for a better home for them.'

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

Children are protected from harm and are safer since they moved into the home. They have made positive and exceptional reductions in their risk-taking behaviours. The manager and staff recognise and understand each child's individual risks and vulnerabilities. The children have comprehensive risk assessments and behaviour support plans that are followed by staff. Highly effective planning helps to manage and minimise risks to children in the home and community.

Staff work extremely hard to manage children's feelings to prevent conflict. This helps children to identify and manage their feelings in a more acceptable way.

Staff prioritise building effective relationships with the children based on mutual respect. Due to the strength of these relationships, staff can implement clear boundaries, routine and structure that create a space for the children to feel emotionally safe. One parent said, 'I love them, they have done so much with [name of child]. They [the child] come to visit and stay over now, it's such a pleasure to see how much they have developed.'

Children rarely go missing from the home. However, when this has occurred, staff follow correct protocols and liaise effectively with the police and local authority to locate the children and return them home safely. Children receive an independent return home interview to address any concerns and identify strategies to reduce risk.

One child has been physically held on several occasions due to their impulsivity and potential risk. Staff act swiftly in line with policy and procedures to ensure the child's safety. The holds are necessary and proportionate to ensure everyone's safety. Physical intervention has significantly reduced for all the children since they moved into the home.

Staff clearly understand the safeguarding procedures. They receive safeguarding training which is regularly updated to make sure that their knowledge remains up to date with current practice. They also receive training in areas specific to the children, such as autism and ADHD, and staff work with the therapeutic team to support children's individual needs. One child uses comic strips and visual prompts to help them get dressed and washed for school.

The home benefits from strong health and safety procedures to protect children from harm. The home has lots of space inside and out. It is clean, tidy, and homely. Children's bedrooms are personalised. The home is currently having redecoration work done.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

The manager is inspirational, confident, and ambitious and advocates strongly for the children in her care. She leads an enthusiastic, highly motivated and committed staff team. One child said, '[Name of manager] is my family. They look after me and care for me. I love them.' The manager demonstrates excellent leadership of the home.

The manager is child-centred and ensures that children receive care that meets their individual needs. The manager recognises the importance of staff needing to feel valued, trusted and listened to. She ensures that their good practice is recognised and celebrated. This means that staff are happy in their roles and provide exceptional care to children.

There is a strong managerial presence in the home. Children and staff benefit from this supportive day-to-day oversight. The manager leads by example, takes on tasks and works directly with the children. Due to this proactive approach, staff feel well supported and valued and have confidence in the manager.

Staff have regular supervision, team meetings, training, and a yearly assessment of their progress. This allows the manager to remain confident in the abilities of the staff team to meet the needs of the children. One member of staff said the manager goes above and beyond for the children in the home. They can ask for anything for the children and are listened to.

The manager has an excellent understanding of the home's strengths and areas for development. She makes effective use of internal and external monitoring to make sure that high standards of practice are maintained.

Feedback from external professionals and families indicates that the manager consistently has the children's needs and safety at the forefront of her decision-making and practice. The manager, staff and children can clearly demonstrate the positive impact that living in the home has had on enhancing the children's lives.

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

### **Recommendation**

- The registered person should ensure that the home is a nurturing and supportive environment that meets the needs of their children. Any damage should be quickly repaired. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards,' page 15, paragraph 3.9)

### **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:** SC475723

**Provision sub-type:** Children's home

**Registered provider:** Witherslack Group Limited

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

**Responsible individual:** Natalie Bennett

**Registered manager:** Deborah Woollams

## Inspectors

Stacey Ilaboya, Social Care Inspector

Deborah Turner, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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