

# Shapwick School

Welfare inspection report for a residential special school

---

<b>DfE registration number</b>	933/6173
<b>Unique reference number for social care</b>	SC031481
<b>Unique reference number for education</b>	123929
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17/10/2012
<b>Inspector</b>	Barbara Davies

---

<b>School address</b>	Mark Road, Burtle, Bridgwater, Somerset, TA7 8NJ
-----------------------	--

<b>Telephone number</b>	01278 722 012
<b>Email</b>	
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr J P Whittock

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 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 assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding 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 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto: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/](http://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](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



## **Purpose and scope of the inspection**

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.<sup>1,2</sup>

## **Information about the school**

Shapwick School is registered with the Department for Education and with the Council for the Registration of Schools Teaching Dyslexic pupils (CReSTeD) under the 'special provision' category. It is inspected by both Ofsted and CReSTeD.

The school specialises in supporting boys and girls whose education has been adversely affected by dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia. The school does not accept students whose primary need is emotional and behavioural difficulties. Approximately half of the students have a statement of special educational needs.

There are five residential houses spread across two sites. A mixed gender house for the preparatory school and four single gender houses for the senior school and sixth form residential students.

The school currently has 155 students on roll across the two sites of which 98 are residential students. The remaining students are day pupils.

---

<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschoools/a00192112/boarding-schools](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschoools/a00192112/boarding-schools).

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>good</b>
Outcomes for residential pupils	good
Quality of residential provision and care	good
Residential pupils' safety	satisfactory
Leadership and management of the residential provision	good

## Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the residential inspection are as follows.

- The boarding provision is central to the school's operation and there is a strong commitment to the continual development and improvement of the provision. In the interim period since the last inspection, significant improvements have been made to some boarding houses with, for example, the replacement of carpets and furnishings. As a result boarding houses are consistently equipped and furnished to a high standard.
- In practice, managers are reflective, perceptive and have a well-informed insight into most of the strengths and weaknesses of boarding and of how these impact on the welfare of boarders. There are, however, no written self-evaluation or quality assurance systems that seek formal feedback from stakeholders, such as parents. The school is therefore unable to demonstrate, for instance, levels of parental satisfaction with boarding or how their views influence the future development of boarding.
- Residential students play a significant role in influencing the direction of the school. The school council, while not meeting as often as boarders would like, is an extremely effective vehicle through which residential students influence both school and boarding practice. Many recent initiatives, such as the cookery room, have been initiated through this or the other informal, consultation mechanisms that exist. Boarders recognise and are proud of the successes they have achieved.
- Leadership and management of boarding is strong and given clear direction by the headteacher who, among his other responsibilities, retains overall responsibility for the development of boarding. Senior boarding staff are appropriately qualified and experienced for their role. Newer members of staff

have been familiarised with their role through the school's induction programme and oversight provided by senior staff. They have, however, yet to commence formal training. Staffing arrangements, in the main, provide consistency of care for residential students although some disruption has been experienced in one of the boarding houses due to a change in the staffing arrangements.

- The diverse needs of residential students are recognised and addressed as a result of comprehensive assessments completed as they are admitted to the school. Residential students develop educationally and socially as a result of the excellent 'specialist' services, such as speech and language therapy and occupational therapy. These services are tailored to meet boarders' identified needs.
- A good and consistent quality of care has had a positive impact on quality of the lives of residential students. An ex-parent who remains associated with the school commented, 'The school was amazing with my child, whose life was really transformed as a result of attending this school and having the opportunity to board.'
- There are several aspects of national minimum standards that that do not fully meet standards but these can easily be rectified. Some of these issues were raised following the last inspection in December 2011. Shortfalls mainly relate to the policies, procedures and practice of staff in relation to the administration of medication; recruitment of staff and the completion of risk assessments for off-site trips that take place at week-ends. It is also recommended that the school updates its anti-bullying procedure, and reviews its practice in relation to the recording of house meetings. Also that the senior school produces a user-friendly guide about boarding so that residential students are informed of their rights and have access to written information about the school's practices.

## **Outcomes for residential pupils**

Residential students live in an inclusive boarding community in which there are mostly harmonious relationships with each other and with the staff. Students voice a strong loyalty and affiliation to their boarding houses and mostly speak very positively of their boarding experience, particularly of the range of activities that are available, the help they receive with their education and 'the kind, caring and considerate approach of the house staff.' However, a recent change in the staffing arrangements in one of the boarding houses, alongside the short temporary absence of the housemother, has been difficult for some students. The perceived lack of familiarity that some replacement staff have of boarding house routines, expectations and practice has adversely impacted on the boarding experience for some students. Some disagreements between boarding staff and residential students are reported. While some residual feeling remains among residential students, confidence is expressed that the headteacher, once aware of the situation, will resolve any remaining issues.

Residential students thoroughly enjoy the social aspect of boarding. Boarding offers residential students the opportunity to acquire strong interests through the extensive range of activities on offer. Extremely good use is made of community resources as well as the school's on-site facilities. A varied range of extra-curricular activities are planned to fulfil the different interests and aspirations of residential students. Through participation in these and the house routine, residential students develop a sense of responsibility and acquire confidence and life skills that help prepare them for the transition into adulthood.

The school council is an extremely successful vehicle for presenting the collective views of students and achieving change in both the school and the boarding house environments. Residential students would, however, like meetings to be more frequent and earlier in the term, so that if there any issues they can be dealt with earlier. While the headteacher understands the views expressed, he outlines sound reasons for conducting the School Council business in the way it is, based on the arrival of new pupils at the beginning of the term.

The arrangements for attending to the health care needs of residential pupils are well established and well organised. Residential students express that they are well cared for and receive any medical attention they require, including their medication. They have an understanding of their own health care needs as well as an understanding of how to keep themselves fit and healthy. Arrangements for the storage and administration of medication, however, do not fully comply with best practice guidance and the school's written guidance for staff in relation to this is limited. This could potentially impact on the health of boarders although there is no evidence to suggest this is the case to date.

## **Quality of residential provision and care**

The quality of residential provision is good. Although there are differences in the age and design of some of the boarding houses, they are all equipped and furnished to an equally high standard and provide an extensive range of high quality facilities for use by residential students. The programme of refurbishment within boarding houses has continued. Significant improvements have been made in the interim period since the last inspection, with new carpets and furniture in some areas. Boarding houses provide a safe and nurturing environment in which residential students say they feel, relaxed, comfortable and safe.

The school is sensitive to the needs of new students. Residential students settle quickly as a result of the school's sensitivity to their individual needs and a well-established induction process. They quickly become familiar with the routines and the geography of the school and boarding provision through the support given by a fellow student who is identified to support and guide them. This is a mutually beneficial arrangement with students responding to the responsibilities they are given. Residential students who have recently joined the school say, 'Within a short period of time you quickly feel at home and know where everything is.'

Meals provide good variety and are nutritionally well balanced. There had been complaints from boarders about the quality of the food, but once raised, these had been resolved to the boarders satisfaction. Residential students have good access to fresh fruit within the boarding houses and in the school dining hall. There is good choice of food available at each meal time and the quantity of it is plentiful, with boarders being able to help themselves.

Outside of teaching time, residential students have access to a good range of facilities and activities through which they bond and gain confidence in social situations. Extra-curricular activities are planned to foster individual interests that residential students may have in activities, such as, sport, art, music and drama. Residential students say, 'The improved range of weekend activities this term has reduced the boredom we used to feel at weekends.' Residential students in both the preparatory school and senior school are equally enthusiastic about the off-site activities that are planned. They particularly enjoy the trips that take place to theme parks and activity centres.

The school council meetings offer residential students the opportunity to influence the way the school and boarding houses operate. Good account is taken of the requests made by students and requests are facilitated where practicable. Minutes of school council meetings are displayed in the games room in the senior school. They show that the school values and is responsive to the requests of students. Examples of where the school's practice has been influenced by students include: recent changes to the menu, the purchase of better quality food products and the development of a cookery room for use by students. Minutes of school council meetings also provide an explanation of why requests cannot be granted. This helps students understand the reasoning behind the decisions made and reduces their frustration.

Residential students also recognise that requests made through the daily house meetings and informal approaches to staff, are equally as effective in achieving change or influencing boarding house practice as the formal school council.

The arrangements for attending to the health care needs of residential students are good. Young people benefit from a medical assessment as they join the school and the school works collaboratively with parents to meet any identified health care needs. The arrangements for the administration and recording of information are in most respects, sound. However some of the boarding houses hold small amounts of medication that are not stored or administered from the container or packet in which it was issued by the pharmacist. There is no evidence to suggest that children are placed at harm as a result of the current arrangements, as the instructions in the houses are consistent with the original packets held in the medical room. However, the school's practice does not correlate with best practice guidance, such as the 'Managing of Medicines in Schools and Early Years Settings', which is available on the Department for Education (DfE) website. There is also a risk that medication could

be mislaid or wrongly administered. This issue school's medication policy does not cover this issue neither does it cover other issues noted within best practice guidance.

## **Residential pupils' safety**

The school makes satisfactory provision for the safety of pupils. A safe environment is maintained within boarding houses with the regular maintenance and testing of mechanical, electrical and fire equipment. Residential students are protected while taking part in off-site activities by the consideration and precautions that are taken, by the house-parents to any risks involved as would any reasonable parent would. However, these arrangements and existing risk assessments are not made sufficiently specific for each risk bearing activity or formally approved by a senior member of school staff. The school is not therefore able to fully demonstrate the safeguards taken or the supervision arrangements in place. For instance, when taking a group of primary school aged children, who have varied swimming abilities, to water parks. This potentially places both house-parents and pupils in a vulnerable position.

The school's child protection policy is consistent with the local safeguarding policy and informs staff how to respond should they have concerns about the welfare of any students. The school reports no safeguarding issues since the last inspection.

Staff understand how to respond to child protection concerns as result of the induction training they receive when first commencing employment and the subsequent formal training they receive from an appropriately qualified professional. The school is proactive and seeks to continually improve the knowledge of staff in relation to child protection issues. For instance, 10 staff members have recently received level three training in child protection.

Written procedures for the recruitment of staff are appropriate and conform to the expectations set out within best practice guidance published by the DfE, entitled, 'Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education.' Records show that practice does not consistently adhere to the guidance. Some staff have commenced work prior to the full range of checks having been completed, including a check with the Criminal Record Bureau, while others have commenced employment before all checks have been completed. However, checks available for one staff member, who has previously worked in a number of different roles with children, do not include a reference from any of these employers or a copy of the interview notes. The school has therefore not been sufficiently robust in establishing whether there have previously been any disciplinary issues or concerns around the applicant's suitability to work with children. Although other safeguards are described as having been taken by the school, such as obtaining verbal testimonials from previous colleagues, these have not been translated into a written risk assessment. Similarly a risk assessment showing the additional supervision arrangements, has not been completed in relation to a staff member who does not have substantial access to children but was employed prior to all the checks, apart from one against list 99, having being



completed. These aspects of the school's practice do not correlate with best practice guidance. The school is therefore unable to fully demonstrate how students have been protected and the basis on which the suitability for employment of these individuals has been decided.

Residential students understand the behaviour expected of them through the regular reinforcement of the rules by staff. Posters, displayed in boarding houses, remind pupils of the expectations around issues such as school uniform. Residential students are well-mannered, polite and courteous to staff, visitors and each other. Residential students say that staff are mostly fair and records show there are few incidents necessitating the use of sanctions and none that require the use of physical restraint. A central record is kept of major sanctions as is required. Each of the boarding houses also makes their own record of any sanctions given for minor misdemeanours and this is an example of where the school's practice exceeds standards. However, there are inconsistencies in practice, in the format that is used and the information that is recorded. This could impact on the effectiveness of the monitoring process.

Preventative action, such as raising the awareness of pupils through education, reduces the number of incidents of bullying. Well-established routines, a visible staff presence and a well-planned programme of activities are strategies that successfully minimise the potential for bullying to occur. Residential students say, 'Staff quickly become aware of any issues and intervene to stop them from getting out of hand.'

Residential students are also well informed, through education and the informal advice given by staff of the dangers presented by the internet and the potential for cyber-bullying. Residential students develop a sense of responsibility over their use of the internet as a result of the education they receive. This, together with on-going vigilance by staff, has effectively reduced the number of reported incidents. However, staff do not have any written guidance to refer to about how to deal with this issue which could potentially result in inconsistencies in practice.

## **Leadership and management of the residential provision**

The leadership and management arrangements of the residential provision are good.

Leadership and management of the residential provision are in a lot of respects progressive. Senior managers strive for excellence as is evident in the high standard of accommodation and facilities that are provided and continually improved. The headteacher assumes key responsibility for boarding. As a result boarding is valued for the contribution it makes to the school and plays an integral and critical role in what the school aims to achieve for residential students. The school is committed to making the boarding experience a positive one and is largely successful in achieving this. The views of residential students are central to the operation and development of boarding.

In practice, the headteacher has an accurate and insightful awareness of most of the

strengths and weaknesses of the boarding provision. However, formal quality assurance systems have yet to be fully developed and consistently implemented. Consequently, the school is unable to demonstrate how the views of parents and carers influence developments within boarding. Similarly it is not possible to evaluate the quality of relationships that parents and carers have with boarding staff. However an absence of complaints is indicative that parents are satisfied with the service provided.

An 'information for students' pack informs parents, carers, students and staff about the aims of the school and of boarding. However this is a detailed document and is not in a format that is easy for students to read or understand. In response to an advisory recommendation made at the last inspection, the headteacher has outlined key information within existing documentation to draw it to students' attention. However it remains in a format that is not easy for students to read or digest the information.

The regular reinforcement of the boarding house routines by staff partially compensates for the lack of written information available to residential students. However its absence means that residential students are not fully informed of their rights and do not have anything to refer to in order to seek clarification about the school's practice. Some key information that should be included in such a booklet, is displayed on the notice-board for children to refer to. However, these do not currently include the details for the Children's Rights Director.

Staff are extremely committed and enthusiastic about their role. However, new staff do not undertake the Children's Workforce Development induction programme or start working towards a relevant level 3 qualification within three months of confirmation of their employment.

In the absence of this, a well-coordinated induction training programme together with the shadowing of senior, experienced staff equips new staff with most of the basic skills and abilities to work within the boarding environment. Policies and procedures are available for staff to refer to and staff work consistently to these. While policies and procedures are subject to regular review, the contents of some guidance documentation, such as, the medication procedure and anti-bullying policy, are lacking in information and are not always based on best practice guidance.

Daily routines are very well-established and reinforced by staff. As a result young people know the standards of behaviour expected and things run smoothly. Residential students are mostly cared for by a consistent and experienced staff team who understand and are responsive to their needs. Although some disruption to the staffing arrangements and the routines of residential students has recently been experienced in one of the boarding houses, contingency arrangements to cover shortfalls in staffing generally cause little disruption and boarders report, 'There are always enough staff around.'

The diverse needs of residential students is recognised and catered for as a result of the comprehensive education and health assessments that are completed as they are admitted to the school.

## **National minimum standards**

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.

- The school has, and implements, appropriate policies for the care of children who are unwell. These include first aid, care of those with chronic conditions and disabilities, administration of medicines and dealing with medical emergencies. The provision of accommodation for children who are unwell has regard to any requirements set out in regulations relating to school premises. (NMS 3.6)
- Schools operate safe recruitment procedures and vet staff in line with the regulatory requirements and having regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State (as referenced in 'Residential Special Schools National Minimum Standards'). (NMS 14.1)
- New staff undertake the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction, beginning within 7 working days of starting their employment and completing training within 6 months. (NMS 19.3)

## **What should the school do to improve further?**

- provide key written information for residential students in a user-friendly format and ensure that this informs residential pupils about their ability to independent contact helplines and that it contains the contact details for the Children's Rights Director
- ensure that risk assessments are completed and authorised by a senior member of school staff in relation to each off-site activity that takes place at the weekend. Also arrange training for staff in relation to the completion of risk assessments
- ensure the school's written guidance for countering bullying includes racism, homophobic and cyber bullying.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



17/10/2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Shapwick School**

Thank you for the way in which you welcomed me to your school and boarding houses. I enjoyed having the opportunity to meet and talk to some of you. It was really good to hear that you all enjoy your boarding experience so much. The school provides a good variety of activities for you to do in the evenings and at weekends.

The school is very good at listening to your views and taking action to make things better for you. A lot of the things you suggest at the school council are acted upon, for instance more planned activities at weekends, a kitchen that students can use to develop cooking skills, and the introduction of a recycling project. However, the school has yet to develop formal systems for seeking feedback and suggestions from your parents and carers.

You receive a lot of help and support with your education and as a result make very good progress. You are extremely well-mannered, polite and helpful to staff, visitors and each other. Behaviour is generally very good and there is seldom need for sanctions to be issued.

Most of the time, the boarding houses operate smoothly as you respect the rules and most of the staff looking after you are experienced and trained. If issues arise, you are confident that these will be resolved by the intervention of the headteacher if he is aware.

Following this inspection I have decided that overall, the school provides a good standard of care. There are a few small weaknesses that the school needs to address. These relate mainly to updating some of the policies, procedures and practice. I have also asked for the school to produce written information in a user-friendly format that informs you about the school's practices and expectations.

Yours sincerely,

Barbara Davies

Yours sincerely,

Barbara Davies