

# Appleford School

Appleford School, Elston Lane, Shrewton, SALISBURY, SP3 4HL

<b>Inspection dates</b>	26/03/2014 to 28/03/2014	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Outstanding	1
Residential pupils' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is outstanding because

- The effectiveness of the residential provision is outstanding. This quality of this provision enables pupils to make exceptional progress from their starting point in all aspect of their lives. This is especially true of the increase in pupils' self-esteem, self-confidence and social skills.
- Excellent relationships exist between the staff and pupils. These are based on respect and trust. These relationships are the foundation for the excellent work the staff undertake with the pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour at the school is exceptional. This is due to the consistent approach of the staff team. The main emphasis for managing behaviour is positive reinforcement and praising pupil achievements.
- The safety of the pupils is central to the schools work. It ensures pupils are safe, that they have a good understanding of their own personal safety as well as ensuring pupils live in a safe environment.
- The residential provision is very well managed and there is a continuous drive for improvement. Staff who care for the pupils are very well trained and are suitably qualified.
- Health care needs are very well managed and pupils are encouraged and enabled to lead a healthy lifestyle. This includes accessing a very wide range of activities both on and off the school campus.

### Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

## Information about this inspection

The school was informed at 9am on 23 March 2014 that the inspection would commence at midday the same day. During the inspection all three of the boarding houses were inspected. Formal meetings were held with four groups of young people as well as informal discussions during the evenings of the inspection in the boarding houses whilst observing boarding practices. Interviews were held with key staff as well as the managers of the boarding provision. The schools policies and records were inspected, including the files of nine young people which were tracked during the inspection. There was no input into this inspection from Parent View as there were insufficient responses.

## Inspection team

Wendy Anderson

Lead social care inspector

Paul Clark

Social care inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

Appleford School is an independent, co-educational residential special school for children aged from 7 to 16 years of age, who have dyslexia and associated learning difficulties. The school has a Christian character and close links with its local church. The school is inclusive of children of other faiths. Pupils may be referred from local authorities or private sources.

The school offers the options of full boarding, weekly or flexible boarding and day provision. The residential provision currently comprises of three boarding houses which are located on the school site. They provide separate accommodation for boys and girls.

The school can accommodate a maximum of 67 residential pupils. The residential provision was last inspected on 3 March 2013.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- review the way information/records on fire safety checks carried out both internally and by external contractors are stored.
- ensure that food items stored in the boarding house refrigerators are appropriately stored and labelled. Also ensure that records of temperatures of these refrigerators are maintained.

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for residential pupils

### Outstanding

Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding. Residential pupils are extremely positive about the school and the staff who care for them. A number of the residential pupils reported that it is like having a second family. Residential pupils have a very strong affiliation to the school and to their boarding houses. Some pupils from service families said that it provides them with stability in their education despite their parents postings.

Residential pupils make extremely good progress from their starting points at the school. This is especially noticeable in their increased self-confidence and self-esteem. An example of this is three residential pupils who on hearing in the media a noted Professor state that dyslexia did not exist wrote to this person to voice their concerns about the statement. As a result, these residential pupils were also interviewed by local radio and press.

Residential pupils develop and expand their social skill and social networks not only by the relationships they make within the school but also those made through attending local clubs and events.

As well as developing socially, residential pupils are supported in developing their independence and practical skills which will be useful in later life. Some spoke of recently decorating a dorm room where they were involved from start to finish. They were very proud of their achievement and this work increased even further their sense of ownership of their boarding house.

Residential pupils are encouraged and enabled to lead a healthy lifestyle. Within the vast range of activities they can take part in a number are physical. This not only helps with their fitness levels but also improves coordination, working and cooperating with others.

The school is a highly inclusive community. Individuals are valued, different cultures are celebrated and pupils are listened to. The school community is very caring and supportive of each other. This approach enables the pupils to develop and grow in a nurturing, caring environment when people care about each others welfare.

Residential pupils are able to maintain contact with the families and friends via phone, email and Skype. This is especially important for those pupils who have family overseas. Pupils and parents provide the school with a list of people the pupils can have email contact with. This ensure the pupils safety.

### Quality of residential provision and care

### Outstanding

The quality of the residential provision is outstanding. Exceptional pastoral arrangements are in place to provide residential pupils with support in all aspects of their life at the school both academic and pastrolal. Staff have high expectations and aspirations for the pupils they care for and they are at the heart of all work undertaken by the staff team. The foundation for this work is the excellent relationships that exist between the staff and the pupils. These relationships are based on trust, openness and the staff having in depth understanding not only of the individual pupils but also of dyslexia and associated learning difficulties.

The school has an excellent induction process for new pupils. This consists of very detailed written documentation for pupils and their parents. All prospective new pupils undertake a two day taster visit which includes an overnight stay. From this visit the school assesses the prospective pupil and their needs and if the school can meet them. The Head operates a robust gatekeeping system for new admissions which ensure that pupils are appropriately placed. On

admission to the school each new pupil is allocated a buddy from the existing school pupil population. Residential pupils said they found this system very helpful as it helped them settle in quickly.

Staff provide residential pupils with very individualised support. Each residential pupil has a social independence plan which contains targets set in consultation with the pupil. These plans cover all aspects of the residential pupil's life. A maximum of three targets are set at any one time. These are regularly reviewed and new targets set. These plans provide evidence of residential pupils progression and their involvement in addressing their individual needs.

As well as the residential staff the school has its own additional support team which includes therapists. They work not only with the individual pupils but also with the staff team in developing strategies to address specific issues. Practice developed is shared across the whole school so as to ensure continuity and consistency of care. This is a major benefit to the pupils as continuity is vital for them to progress.

Residential pupils are able to take part in a vast range of activities both on and off campus. Pupils said that 'there is always loads to do and if we have any new suggestions staff will try and sort these out for us'. The range of activities is age appropriate and as well as being fun they build pupils self-confidence and social interactions.

Health care arrangements at the school are well managed. The policies and procedure for health care are adhered to in practice. When this is not the case the school responds robustly to ensure pupils welfare is safeguarded and their health needs met. In one of the boarding houses the surgery had a refrigerator specifically for medicines. This did not have a lock and records of refrigerator temperatures are not maintained when the fridge is in use. This was addressed during the inspection as was the provision of a call facility for pupils to use should they be resting in the surgery.

Residential pupils benefit from living in accommodation which is of a high standard. Boarding houses are comfortably furnished and residential pupils are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms. Privacy screens have been placed in some shared bedroom to increase pupil's privacy. Pupils said they really like these.

Catering at the school is of a good standard. Menus are varied and offer choice. In the dining room there is a book for pupils to record their comments on the food. This is regularly read by the chef and amendments are made to the menus as a result. The menus also have themed days where foods from different cultures are celebrated. Within the boarding houses pupils are able to have snacks and drinks outside of main meal times. However in one boarding house cold meats were not appropriately stored. This could potentially place pupils at risk.

### **Residential pupils' safety**

**Good**

The safety of residential pupils at the school is good. The school has very robust procedures for child protection and the recruitment and vetting of staff which are closely adhered to in practice. All staff at the school receive regular training on safeguarding and child protection from an external trainer. This is then enhanced by on-line training. The school has a good working relationship with the Local Authority Designated Officer which includes open discussion on issues as well as making referrals when required.

Pupils' safety at the school is given a high priority. This includes a very robust risk assessment process which ensure pupils live in a safe and secure environment. Work is also undertaken with pupils on personal safety including safety on the internet. Pupils said they felt safe at the school and were able to name a number of staff who they would feel comfortable talking too if they

have any concerns. Pupils also have access to two independent visitors and all were aware of how to contact them should they so wish. On the rare occasion where unknown person have come on to the school site this has been promptly dealt with by staff and has included the involvement of the police.

Pupils behaviour observed throughout the inspection was exceptional. The school is a very caring community where respect to others and an ethos of tolerance of people differences is fostered. The main focus on managing behaviour at the school is that of positive reinforcement. There are consistent positive behaviour strategies in place which are very effective. The use of restraint and major sanctions is minimal. Where they have been used this has been appropriate. The use of low level sanctions is based on rules for good community living and the pupils felt they were fair.

Pupils report that incidents of bullying are rare. If this does happen staff address it very quickly. The school has robust policies and procedures in place for anti bullying work which are adhered to in practice. This includes guidance on cyber bullying.

Clear policies and procedure are in place should a pupil go missing. Since the last inspection there have been no such incidents.

Fire records inspected contained the required information, however this was not easily accessible. Also one fire door was seen propped open during the inspection. Staff informed the inspectors that an electronic door hold back device had been ordered to solve this issues but was yet to arrive.

The school had very good maintenance systems which ensure that any work is quickly undertaken and means pupils do not live in an unsafe environment.

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

The leadership and management of the residential provision is outstanding. The residential provision is given a high profile at the school and at the heart of the school community. The managers of the residential provision have a robust understanding of the provisions strengths and areas for improvement. This is supported by clear monitoring of the residential practices and documents by the head of boarding, the deputy of boarding and the Section 20 independent visitor. This monitoring provides critical evaluation of the work undertaken and the standard of practice. Information from these systems are used to further develop the schools practices and thus improve the service the pupils receive from the school. The school not only has high expectations of its pupils but also of its staff and the service they provide.

Both of the areas for improvement from the last inspection have been meet. These included the provision of privacy screens in the dormitories and the further enhancement of the individual plans for pupils.

The pupils are cared for by a very committed, child centred and well trained staff team. A significant number of the staff are NVQ 3 trained and new staff have been enrolled on this course. Those in senior or management positions in the boarding houses have NVQ 4. There is an excellent training programme for all staff at the school. This ensures that staff training reflects current practice and updates to legislation. New staff go through a rigorous induction process which ensures they are equipped to provide pupils with a good standard of care from the outset. Staff to pupil ratios in the boarding houses are very good. This means pupils are able to get the individual attention and input they require to work on and achieve their targets. The staff team have extremely detailed knowledge of the pupils they care for. This ensures pupils receive the help they need in a way they can understand and work with.

The staff team receive excellent support from the management team. This includes regular staff meetings, supervision and annual appraisals. Information from these sessions is linked to the individual member of staff's training programme which in turn enhances their development. Staff members interviewed were very positive about the senior management team.

All required policies are in place and are fully and effectively implemented. These are regularly reviewed and updated to reflect current practices and changes to legislation. Records are comprehensive, detailed and helpful to the support of residential pupils. All records are securely stored.

Consultation with residential pupils is excellent. There is an effective school council and prefect team which will raise the views of residential pupils should they feel unable to do so. However pupils said they feel able to raise their own points even with senior management who they said are readily available to them. There is also a suggestion box for pupils' use. In the dining area there is a comments book for pupils to give feedback on the meals provided. Pupils are fully involved in the development of all their individual plans. One pupil said 'why wouldn't they involve us when they are writing plans about us?' Staff keep parents fully informed about their children and they too have input to pupils' plans and targets.

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	126535
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC039141
<b>DfE registration number</b>	865/6008

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Independent
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	86
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	7 to 16
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr David King
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	04/03/2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01980 621020
<b>Email address</b>	secretary@appleford.wilts.sch.uk

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