

# Sky College

Pickeridge Close, Taunton, TA2 7HW

## Inspection dates

28–29 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		Adequate	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- As a result of the dedication, hard work and ambition of the headteacher and the senior team, the school has improved a great deal since the previous inspection. Students make good academic progress, and improve their behaviour.
- The school's leadership has transformed its approach to become a school where students' social, emotional and mental health difficulties are carefully assessed and responded to in a planned way. This enables students to make good progress in their social and emotional development.
- Teaching is now good throughout the school. Students enjoy their lessons and make progress at a good rate. Students are able to recognise the progress they are making.
- Achievement is good because teachers have high expectations, and provide support to students when required. From their low starting points, students make good progress in their reading, writing and mathematics skills.
- Staff are skilled at supporting students' behaviour. As a result, students behave well during lessons, social times, and when boarding.
- Well-planned activities support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well during school and in the boarding provision.
- A wide range of academic and practical courses prepares students well for success in the future.
- The good skills and relevant experience of the new members of governing body means they have quickly taken on responsibility for overseeing the effective running of the school.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Any concerns are promptly and effectively dealt with.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students' do not consistently produce their best work. Teachers' marking does not always inform students about how to improve their work.
- A small minority of students do not attend school regularly enough.
- Student's targets for improvements do not always match their individual needs and abilities.
- Not enough students enter further education, employment or training when they leave school.
- Staff in the boarding house do not always keep up to date with national guidance, or regularly review the effectiveness of their own work.
- The school does not meet all of the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

## Information about this inspection

- Five lesson observations and five brief visits to lessons were conducted by the inspector and the deputy headteacher together. Inspectors observed meal times, a break time and an assembly.
- Observations were made in the boarding house during different times of the day, including the evening.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and senior leaders, the head of care, the Chair of the Governing Body, and other members of staff. Telephone conversations were held with some parents and carers, and with a representative from the local authority. Discussions with individual students took place both in the boarding provision and in the school.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents including school policies, development and care plans, records of students' progress, attendance, behaviour and staff recruitment, and minutes from governors' meetings. They also looked at students' work and case studies of specific students prepared by the school.
- Inspectors took account of feedback from staff questionnaires and a survey the school had conducted to gain parents' and carers' views. There were not enough responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaires to gain information for the inspection.

## Inspection team

Andy Lole, Lead inspector  
Paula Lahey

Additional Inspector  
Social Care Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Sky College is a special school for boys between the ages of 10 and 17 who have a statement of special educational need or an education, health and care plan for social, emotional or mental health difficulties. Many students have previously attended at least four different schools.
- The school has recently set up a specialist nurture provision.
- Students come from different parts of Somerset.
- Almost all students are from White British backgrounds.
- Ninety per cent of students are supported by the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals or looked-after children by the local authority. This proportion is well above average.
- The school has boarding provision for up to ten students who can be accommodated up to four nights a week. Only six students are currently using this facility. This provision was last inspected in March 2014.
- The buildings have recently had significant refurbishment including some new buildings to provide up-to-date accommodation.
- The school has an off-site classroom in Bridgwater, run by its own staff. Some students attend the Alternative Education Centre on the Blackdown Hills, Deane Discovery Centre Forest School, the Mendip Motor Project in Street, and Reach Alternative Education Provision in South Petherton.
- The vast majority of the governing body are new to post, including the Chair and Vice-Chair.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
  - ensuring that students' work books always show their best work in order for students to feel proud of their achievements
  - improving marking so that it consistently tells students what teachers value about their work and identifies what students need to do to make improvements
  - ensuring that each student's targets for improvements are matched to their own individual needs and abilities
- ensuring that most students are able to move onto further education, employment or training when they leave school. Improve the behaviour and safety of students by:
  - maintaining the current low level of short-term exclusions
  - improving rates of attendance for the small minority to students who do not attend regularly.
- The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.
  - 15.7: The school's procedures are compatible with the runaway and missing from home and care (RMFHC) protocols and procedures applicable to the area where the school is located. Where children placed out of authority go missing, the head of care follows the local RMFHC protocol and complies with and makes staff aware of any other processes required by the placing authority.
  - 19.2: All existing care staff have attained a relevant minimum level 3 qualification or have qualifications which demonstrate the same competencies. All new staff engaged from the commencement of these standards hold these qualifications or begin working towards them within three months of confirmation of employment.
  - 19.6: All staff have access to support and advice for their role. They also have regular supervision and formal annual appraisal of their performance.
  - 20.1: The governing body, trustees, partnership, or organisation responsible for carrying on the school arrange for one of their number, or a representative who does not work at, or directly manage, the school, to visit the school once every half term and complete a written report on the conduct of the school. Where the school has an individual proprietor, that person may carry out such visits personally if they are not also the headteacher (or school equivalent).
  - 20.2: Most monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include: checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, use of physical interventions, risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children; assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture

and equipment of the school; and opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet the visitor (in private if they wish).

- 20.4: The headteacher (or school equivalent), governing body, trustees, partnership, or organisation responsible for carrying on the school carries out, and records in writing, once each year a review of the operation and resourcing of the school's welfare provision for boarding pupils, in relation to: its statement of purpose; its staffing policy; the placement plans for individual children; and an internal assessment of its compliance with these standards. Where appropriate such a report may be incorporated within a review of the whole school.
  
- Ensure that self-assessment of the boarding provision is robust and evaluative, and contributes to improving the quality of service provided.
- Ensure that the boarding house staff keep up to date with changes in legislation and statutory guidance, and use this information to develop key policies for the well-being of students.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- Under the strong leadership of the headteacher and his senior management team the school has made very good progress over the last two years. Students make good academic progress, and are able to manage their own behaviour well. The clear vision for the ongoing development of the school is well matched to the needs of the students and the local community. Staff, governors and students share this vision.
- Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This includes the quality of teaching, how well students are progressing in their learning, and how well the subjects taught match the needs of the students. Using this information, leaders plan well to make continuous improvements. Through their high expectations and strong ambition for excellent outcomes for all students, they have created a very positive ethos and culture within the school.
- Senior managers ensure all staff contribute effectively to students' progress. Staff are well supported through an effective range of training and development activities. If individuals are not able to maintain high levels of performance, the school takes appropriate action to address this.
- Students' good progress is supported well through a wide range of good quality academic and practical courses. This includes supporting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and helping to prepare them for life in modern Britain. Students are transfixed when presentations in assemblies about the social circumstances that led up to the Second World War and the consequences of the holocaust are made clear to them. They reflect sensibly about the links between these events and things that are happening in the world currently.
- Middle managers lead their teams to accelerate students' progress in priority areas for improvement across the school.
- As a result of new assessment procedures, and effective communication among staff, teachers have a good understanding of each student's level of emotional and social development. Using this information, staff support students to take part in a range of carefully planned activities aimed at helping them to address things they are finding challenging.
- Additional funds that the school receives are used well. Year 7 catch-up funding has resulted in the improved reading ability of students. Pupil premium funding is effectively supporting a wide number of initiatives including improving support for students' emotional and social needs. Primary sports funding is improving facilities and increasing the take up of coaching sessions.
- Senior leaders manage child protection concerns well and in the best interests of the students. The designated leader for safeguarding works well with external safeguarding agencies. She confidently raises levels of concern where necessary and appropriately challenges shortfalls in the practice of others. Leaders ensure that students have equality of opportunity and that any discrimination is tackled effectively.
- Since the last inspection the quality of monitoring and assessment of the boarding provision has not ensured that all necessary improvements have been made. Visits by the previous governing body did not take place as frequently as required. Consequently, leaders and managers of boarding were not fully aware of the provision's actual strengths and weaknesses. The new board of governors have quickly addressed these difficulties and are now ensuring that they take full responsibility for this area of the school's work.
- Leaders and managers of boarding have not fully complied with all the National Minimum Standards. They have also not kept up to date with all changes in legislation and current issues that may affect the young people in their care. As a result, a small number of policies do not fully reflect current statutory guidance.
- The school has acted on the requirements of the previous welfare inspection. As such, the boarding house now has suitable blinds and/or curtains. More useful systems are in place to enable effective communication between the boarding and education teams. Boarding house staff work well to embed the overall ethos and aims of the school.
- Careers guidance and support are well managed. Students start meeting with an advisor in Year 10. This continues into Year 11, giving students appropriate time to consider their options and to work towards achieving them. Work-experience placements and 'taster visits' to local colleges are organised for students. Half of the students who left the school in 2014 went on to further education, employment or training. Students are well prepared for their next steps after leaving school, although a minority do not move on to further education, employment and training when they leave school.
- The local authority provides little support to the school.

### ■ The governance of the school:

- Although many of the governors are recently new to the post the good levels of knowledge, skills and abilities held within the group means they have quickly organised themselves well and are already valued by the senior management team for their perceptions and feedback. The headteacher provides detailed reports so that governors know how well students are achieving and the impact on achievement of spending of additional funds. Governors have sufficient knowledge to challenge and support senior managers about the quality of teaching. Governors ensure that staff performance is monitored, and that any under performance is tackled. Staff performance is linked to pay progression. School finances are managed well.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good.
- Behaviour observed in lessons, during break times and lunchtimes, in assembly and in the boarding house was good. Once settled in the school, students enjoy being at school. As a result of effective support and guidance, students develop good attitudes to learning and manage the social aspects of the school day well.
- The strong relationships that exist with the boys and adults enable staff to successfully manage potentially difficult situations. This supports students in maintaining good levels of engagement in their learning. Behaviour is managed positively. Students respond well to the fair, consistent and calm approach provided by the school and boarding house staff.
- Students know that there is always someone available in the support area when they are feeling distressed. They use this provision well to help themselves learn how to manage their emotions without becoming aggressive.
- Boarders report that bullying does not happen in the boarding house. When it does occur in school students report that staff quickly and effectively deal with it.
- There has been a recent reduction in the use of short-term exclusions. This improvement has occurred because staff are now consistently expecting better standards of behaviour from the students. The school has got better at identifying which students it can look after safely. This has resulted in some students moving to other schools.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Students feel safe and are kept safe. Students feel confident in speaking to a range of adults in the school about times when they may feel anxious or unsafe. They are assured that staff take action to deal with these issues.
- All staff have received child protection training at the level relevant to their responsibilities. They use this information well to safeguard students.
- Clear systems are in place to ensure that students are safe when they attend alternative provision. Quality assurance checks are made by the school before new placements are used. School staff then keep in regular contact with key staff at all placements. Frequent checks are made about students' attendance, progress and behaviour. Detailed records are kept of this information.
- Students are kept safe by good systems to ensure the health and safety of the environment. These systems, including those for fire safety, are well managed. Procedures for recruiting staff are carried out well, ensuring that all safety checks are completed.
- Students are well supported in developing their skills to keep themselves safe. They use this support well to develop healthy relationships and to keep safe on the internet and when out in the local area.
- There are no incidents of pupils going missing or absconding from the provision. Staff are clear about how they would respond should this happen.
- Overall rates of attendance have improved since the last school inspection and, for the vast majority of students, are now close to those for students attending similar schools. However, poor attendance continues to be an issue for a small minority of students. Staff do all they can to support students when they are not in school. The length of journey to get to school contributes to poor attendance for some students. In response to this, more localised education is organised where possible. The school has rigorous procedures to encourage and support good attendance. This includes allocating a member of staff who is known to families to work with them. Local authority agencies are involved where possible. These have all contributed to the improved rate.

**The quality of teaching** is good

- There has been a marked improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. As a result of this students are now making good progress in all areas of their learning, including literacy, reading and mathematics.
- The teaching of mathematics is good because students have regular opportunities to practise and develop their mental mathematic skills. They are then well supported to use these when learning about more complex concepts. In science, teaching is well matched to students' interests, with students being fascinated by the evidence of damage done to lungs as a result of smoking. Good questioning by the teacher resulted in students being able to share their ideas and knowledge confidently.
- The school has improved the way in which it monitors how well students are progressing. This had led to teachers having more accurate information, which has helped them ensure that the work they provide is well matched to each student's ability. Teachers are skilled at knowing how to adapt their teaching part way through a lesson in order to maintain students' interest, or to increase or decrease the level of challenge.
- Daily individual or small group reading sessions have contributed to significant improvements in students' reading and spelling skills. These enable students to develop their confidence in reading aloud, which they are then expected to do in other lessons.
- Teachers now regularly reinforce students' skills in English in their lessons regardless of what subject they teach. During the inspection this was observed in food technology, art and physical education lessons. Students demonstrate good reading, writing and speaking and listening skills whenever they are required to use these. This contributes well to their overall progress in English.
- Students' workbooks demonstrate the good progress students are making. However, books sometimes have unfinished or work that is not the student's best effort. Work is not always consistently marked in a way that encourages students to feel pride in their work, or to help them know what they need to do to improve.
- Targets that are set for students' achievements by the end of the year are not always specific enough. These are not always based on an analysis of each student's needs or abilities.

**The achievement of pupils** is good

- There has been a recent significant improvement in the rate at which students' progress. This is a result of better management of students' behaviour and better teaching.
- On entry to the school most students are working at a level that is below that typically expected for their age. This is partly due to their complex social, emotional and mental health difficulties, but also the frequency of changes of school that many of them have experienced. From these low starting points students make good progress in their reading, writing and mathematics. Disadvantaged students (those supported by the pupil premium funding), who make up the vast majority of the school, make good progress.
- Progress is stronger in reading and writing than in mathematics. Students' progress is good for all age groups, but is fastest in Key Stages 2 and 3.
- As a result of additional teaching that is provided when students are not making the expected rate of progress in reading, writing or mathematics, students are effectively supported to catch up.
- The most able students make good progress. This is because the work they are given is well matched to their abilities.
- Students who attend alternative provision make good progress. Frequent checks are made to make sure students are benefiting from these placements.
- The school does not enter students early for GCSEs.
- In July 2014 most students who left the school successfully achieved externally accredited qualifications. Examples of qualifications gained include GCSE in English, mathematics and science or Entry Level or Functional Skills certificates, and BTEC awards.



<b>Outcomes for boarders/Outcomes for residential pupils</b>	<b>are good</b>
<b>Quality of boarding provision and care/Quality of residential provision and care</b>	<b>is good</b>
<b>Boarders' safety/Residential pupils' safety</b>	<b>is good</b>
<b>Leadership and management of boarding provision/Leadership and management of the residential provision</b>	<b>are adequate</b>

- Students benefit well from boarding in the school. They receive good quality care, which enhances their personal, social and educational development. Boarders acquire skills that support their independence and development in preparation for adult life.
- The physical environment is welcoming, comfortable and homely. Boarders personalise their rooms and respect the provision. This contributes to students' enjoyment of boarding. Their needs are well understood by the adults who care for them. Relationships between students, and between students and staff, are respectful, positive and assured. Boarding students are confident that staff care about them and are concerned for their well-being.
- Feedback from boarders and their families about the boarding experience is wholeheartedly positive. Students feel that boarding has helped them to develop positive behaviour and achieve well. One boarder supported this view by saying, 'My key worker motivates me to get to the best level at school, with my behaviour and at sports'.
- Activities provided in boarding contribute to pupils' learning and development well. A range of educational trips takes place every term which boarding pupils enjoy. Recent activities include visits to national museums. In addition, boarding house staff support students with their homework and school projects. Boarding students' development of literacy and numeracy skills is encouraged by the provision of a range of learning opportunities which they find fun.
- Boarders develop good physical and emotional health because they receive good support and direction from staff. They are routinely involved in sporting and health-related activities such as reducing their weight and giving up smoking.
- Boarders' achievements are celebrated when certificates, pictures and craft work are displayed around the provision. Good use is made of community meetings to share in each other's successes.
- Boarding students generally behave well. Good use is made of techniques for de-escalation and distraction when students become stressed. Students very much enjoy the opportunity to receive rewards for positive behaviour. A boarding student reported that since they had been boarding they no longer got into trouble in their local community and with offending behaviours. Another student said how proud he is that he can now walk away from a situation that would previously cause him to feel angry.
- There are good quality plans in place for each student. Boarding students and their families contribute to these plans which helps to personalise them. Boarding staff have a good understanding of students' needs and meet these in practice.



## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

Residential provision		
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>	123939
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC038758
<b>Local authority</b>	Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	451172

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The inspection of residential provision 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>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	10–17
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	52
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	6
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Gail Crees
<b>Headteacher</b>	Richard Berry
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19–20 February 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01823275569
<b>Fax number</b>	1823330277
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:rberry@educ.somerset.gov.uk">rberry@educ.somerset.gov.uk</a>

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