

Haydon Bridge High School – Ridley Hall Boarding Wing

North Bank, Haydon Bridge, Northumberland, NE47 6LR

Inspection dates

9 to 11 June 2015

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Quality of care and support

Requires improvement

Good

How well children and young people are protected

Requires improvement

Impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Requires improvement

Summary of key findings

The boarding provision requires improvement because

- Young people make excellent progress in all aspects of their lives as a direct result of the boarding experience. They enjoy boarding and the opportunities it gives them, and can describe how they become more independent and confident as a result of staying here.
- Staff are aware of the differing needs of young people and provide close and nurturing support where necessary. Relationships between staff and young people are excellent. Staff listen to young people's views and respect their opinions.
- Young people's behaviour is outstanding. They have a strong sense of identity with the boarding community and almost always respect what few rules there are. Staff manage any disciplinary issues fairly and without undue fuss.
- Boarding provides a safe environment for young people. There is no bullying, and young people have confidence in the systems in place for reporting any concerns that they may have. As a result, young people report that they feel protected.
- Although staff provide a good standard of care, the induction of new staff, and training for all staff, is poorly developed. Additionally, staff supervision has only recently been implemented and there have been no formal staff performance reviews.

- Management monitoring and oversight has improved markedly over the past few months. Dedicated external support for the boarding management has enabled rapid development of much-needed systems and processes. However, the ongoing management structure has not yet been finalised, and the robustness of these arrangements will determine the capacity of the boarding provision to improve further. The school does not meet five national minimum standards.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school does not meet the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

- 13.7 The school follows and maintains the policies and documents described in Appendix 1.
- 14.2 For all persons over 16 (not on the roll of the school) who after April 2002 began to live on the same premises as boarders but are not employed by the school, an enhanced certificate with a barred list information must be obtained from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).
- 14.3 There is a written agreement between the school and any person over 16 not employed by the school but living in the same premises as children (for example, members of staff households). This specifies the terms of their accommodation, guidance on contact with pupils, their responsibilities to supervise their visitors, and notice that accommodation may cease to be provided if there is evidence that they are unsuitable to have regular contact with pupils. They must be required to notify an unrelated designated senior member of staff if they are charged with, or convicted of, any offence.
- 15.1 Any staff member or volunteer employed or volunteering in a position working with boarders has a job description reflecting their duties, receives induction training in boarding when newly appointed, and receives regular reviews of their boarding practice, with opportunities for training and continual professional development in boarding.
- 15.6 Staff working within the school know and implement the school's policy in relation to boarders going missing and their role in implementing that policy. Staff actively search for boarders who are missing, including working with police where appropriate.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Consider how to provide greater privacy for boarders when showering.
- Provide ongoing continuous professional development for senior boarding staff.

Information about this inspection

The lead inspector gave two hours' notice of the inspection to the acting headteacher. Inspection activity comprised of: a full tour of the boarding accommodation; discussions with young people individually and in groups; discussions with boarding staff, managers, parents, acting headteacher and members of the interim executive board; examination of policies, documents and records; evaluation of a survey undertaken by young people; and observation of routines within boarding at various times of the day and evening.

Inspection team

Nick Murphy

Lead social care inspector

Graham Robinson

Social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Ridley Hall is the boarding house of Haydon Bridge High School, a maintained school. Ridley Hall is situated in a rural location, four miles from the main school site. It currently accommodates 36 pupils of both genders aged between 13 and 18 years, from Monday through to Thursday nights only. Boarding is available for students that live in certain post code areas and have to travel for more than one and a quarter hours to get to school.

An education inspection in December 2014 judged the school's overall effectiveness as inadequate and it was placed in special measures. An interim executive board is currently in place. The boarding provision was last inspected in October 2011.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Requires improvement

The positive impact of boarding upon the development and progress of young people is clearly evidenced. The school is able to demonstrate the difference in academic achievement between boarders and day students. This impact is borne out by young people themselves. One said, 'Coming here to board has meant the difference between getting Cs and As in my exams.' Parents also appreciate the value of boarding, one saying, 'Boarding has definitely improved my daughter's academic achievements. Having teachers on hand to assist with their homework is so helpful.' Attendance levels are also significantly better for young people who board.

Young people also gain social skills from boarding. Many live in remote areas where they have few friends or opportunities to socialise. Two young people made the same point: 'The best thing about boarding is making friends and having a social life.' The experience also promotes independence and increases young people's confidence and self-reliance. One young person described how, on a recent outward-bound school trip, he was much more relaxed and confident than his peers who do not board. Young people are good at organising and managing themselves. For example, they do not need chivvying from staff to get themselves up in the morning and ready for school. A young person said, 'It's actually no problem getting up when there are seven alarm clocks going off.'

Young people's behaviour is outstanding. They enjoy excellent relationships with staff and respect the shared values of the boarding community. Staff are committed and caring, providing support for all young people in order to meet their individual needs. However, staff do not have the advantage of additional training opportunities. This would give them better skills and knowledge, for example in relation to young people who have particularly specialised needs.

Young people are able to give their views about boarding in both formal and informal ways. Staff listen and give weight to what they have to say, valuing their opinions and feelings, and changes to boarding routines have been made as a result. Young people are in good health, staff communicating any concerns to parents.

Up until very recently, management monitoring of the quality of care and the safety of young people has been weak. The school has taken decisive action to ensure that leaders and managers now know which areas need further development in order to enhance the experience of young people.

Quality of care and support

Good

Staffing levels within the boarding provision are generally sufficient to meet the needs of young people. It is rare that young people are unable to take part in the activities of their choice because of staffing issues. For example, young people are able to stay behind at school to partake in after-school clubs in the knowledge that staff will collect them and return them safely to the boarding house. Young people are generally very independent and self-sufficient, but they know that staff are always on hand to offer support if

necessary. Many staff are teachers or support staff who work in the main school. This is valuable in providing a consistency of care, although all staff take pains to make the boarding house 'home' and not an extension of school. For example, sanctions that may have been applied to a young person in the classroom are not carried over into the boarding evening.

Some young people have particular needs which require extra support from staff. Managers ensure that staff are able to provide this, and work in partnership with parents and other agencies to review programmes of care and implement change where necessary. This means that all young people, particularly those with specific vulnerabilities, are treated as individuals and their potential stimulated and nurtured. Careful and gradual induction helps new boarders to settle in and get to know staff and other young people. This builds a sound foundation for a happy and productive experience. One young person said, 'I had an overnight stay as part of my induction, this was supportive and helpful.'

Staff promote a healthy lifestyle for young people. They encourage and support sporting activities while not ignoring cultural and recreational pursuits. A particular feature of the boarding provision is its strong involvement in charitable activities which benefit the wider community. This develops young people's awareness of the needs of others and their place in society.

Food is plentiful, varied and nutritious, freshly cooked and attractively presented. When asked if they thought the food was good, one young person said, 'Oh yes, it's amazing.' Young people play an active part in choosing the menus, through the 'food council'.

The boarding accommodation is exceptionally spacious, offering ample opportunity for group activities inside the building as well as in the extensive grounds. There is space too if young people want to spend time alone, alongside good facilities for doing homework. All areas are maintained to a high level and spotlessly clean. Although there are ample bathing facilities, showers do not provide sufficient privacy for young people.

How well children and young people are protected Requires improvement

Young people are unanimous in saying that they feel safe within the boarding provision. The incidence of bullying behaviour is negligible. One young person said, 'I'm not bullied and staff will react if things start to get uncomfortable.' Another said, 'Staff are quick to intervene and do not let things get out of hand.' Many young people commented on the cohesion within the boarding group. One commented, 'I've known most of the other young people for years. It's like family.' Young people express confidence in the complaints process. Information is freely available about how young people can contact people outside the school if they need to, for example, the Office of the Children's Commissioner.

There is a strong emphasis within the staff group on keeping young people safe. Over the last six months the acting headteacher and the interim executive board have raised the profile of safeguarding within boarding considerably. Policies and procedures governing safeguarding issues have recently been comprehensively revised. Much work on e-safety has been undertaken with young people, helping them to keep themselves

protected on social media. Staff understand what they need to do if they become aware of any child protection issues, and how to respond to young people if they come to them with a concern. At the time of the inspection, there was no missing from home policy available to staff. This was quickly rectified but needs further development. In the recent past, allegations about the behaviour of members of staff have not always been managed in line with statutory guidance. This oversight has been fully addressed by the school and all staff are aware of the correct procedures.

Case files on young people are being developed which include individual risk assessments. These are helpful in identifying potential issues which may cause harm to young people, for example, going missing, or being bullied. Staff have good awareness of young people who are particularly vulnerable and pay them close attention to ensure their welfare and safety is promoted.

The ethos within the boarding community encourages young people to develop their own self-control, tolerance of others, and respect for the boundaries of group living. Occasionally these boundaries are tested but staff are skilful in managing such situations effectively and without drama. The use of sanctions to manage misbehaviour is minimal, but when they are necessary they are proportionate and short-lived. It is very rare for young people who board to be excluded.

The safety of the environment is well-managed. The use of the residential accommodation at weekends by people not connected with the school is organised so that there is no impact on the safety of young people. The staff recruitment and selection process meets requirements. However, the necessary checks and agreements in respect of adults who live on the site but are not employed by the school have not been carried out.

Impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers Requires improvement

Since the school was placed in special measures, the acting headteacher has implemented the necessary programme of change with vigour. The subsequent establishment of the interim executive board has further driven the process of improvement. The local authority has committed significant resources to the school in general and boarding in particular. For example, an experienced children's home manager employed by the local authority has been seconded to support the acting headteacher and senior boarding staff. This has been highly effective in identifying the provision's weaknesses, building on strengths, and developing policies and procedures which are fit for purpose. Some required documentation has not yet been implemented. For example, staff whose main role is in school but who additionally work in boarding do not have additional job descriptions which specify their duties. Also, the crisis management plan does not include how unforeseen staffing shortages will be managed.

Additionally, there is no staff induction, development and training programme. This means that staff are not properly prepared, and may not have the right skills, for the task of caring for young people. Senior boarding staff have had no opportunity for professional development, and are out of touch with practice in the wider sector. Other staff have only just commenced receiving formal supervision. This needs further development and embedding within the boarding routine, in order to help staff reflect on

their practice and hone their skills. Furthermore, no staff have had their performance formally appraised, denying the school the opportunity to effectively address shortfalls in individual staff practice and build on strengths.

Staff have good relationships with parents and keep in touch with them on a regular basis. Parents express trust in the staff to care for their children safely and sensitively. One parent said, 'I think the matron is one of the best. I would confide in her absolutely, if I wasn't totally happy with the level of care provided my child wouldn't be there.' Links between boarding and the main school have been improved, resulting in better communication of day-to-day issues affecting young people.

Both points for improvement made at the previous boarding inspection have been addressed. As a result, the arrangements for the administration of medication are more robust, and improvements in some monitoring activity have been made. The management structure within boarding is currently under review. The outcome of this review is of critical importance in determining whether the boarding provision is able to sustain and develop the significant improvements that have been made over the last six months.

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework*.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

School details

Unique reference number	122328
Social care unique reference number	SC043077
DfE registration number	929/4130

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 boarding schools.

Type of school	Maintained boarding school
Number of boarders on roll	36
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	13 to 18 years
Headteacher	Mrs Helen McCormick (Acting)
Date of previous boarding inspection	5 October 2011
Telephone number	01434 684422
Email address	admin@haydonbridge.northumberland.sch.uk

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