

The Harefield Academy

NORTHWOOD WAY, HAREFIELD, MIDDLESEX, UB9 6ET

Inspection dates	08/07/2015 to 10/07/2015	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Requires improvement	3
The quality of care and support	Good	2
How well children and young people are protected	Requires improvement	3
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings

The boarding provision requires improvement because

- There was a failure to follow appropriate safeguarding procedures which undermined parent's confidence in the rigour of the safe care of students in the main school.
- The safeguarding policy and procedures are out of date and the school have commenced a revision incorporating the views of partner organisations.
- There has been a loosely structured use of boarding accommodation by staff and student tutors which the school have recognised they did not manage well. The acting principal has acted robustly to stop this use of accommodation and ensure children and young people live in an appropriately safe environment.
- The director of boarding, supported by the vice principal of achievement and boarding, has established effective and comprehensive communication systems with parents.
- Boarding is highly valued by the school and the senior team have successfully integrated it into the whole school operation. Children and young people who board show stunning academic and social progress compared to other students in the school.
- Children and young people display excellent social skills and interact positively with the enthusiastic and skilled staff team. Staff operate a highly effective behavioural tracking system which aids them in addressing negative behaviours in a consistent manner and rewarding positive behaviours effectively.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

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

The school ensures that:

- arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
- Such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.(NMS 11.1)

Suitable accommodation (consisting of accommodation in which meals may be taken, living accommodation and sleeping accommodation) and suitable toilet and washing facilities are provided for residential staff. This accommodation is appropriately separated from the accommodation and facilities provided for boarders. (NMS 15.9)

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Governors to rigorously review and monitor the school's policies.
- Improve the robustness of lockable drawers for children and young people in the boarding house.
- Complete the redrafting of the safeguarding policy.

Information about this inspection

The lead inspector contacted the school at 09:20 on 8 July 2015 and at 13:00 both inspectors met: the acting principal, and two vice principals. During the inspection meetings occurred with: boarders, residential staff, two governors, those with responsibility for, safeguarding, health and safety, catering student welfare, and administration of recruitment records. Inspectors conversed with the chair of governors and other staff. They scrutinised: self-evaluation; safeguarding interventions; questionnaires; point in time surveys; recruitment files; medication records; staff files; single central record; and all policies and procedures. Inspectors met the independent team investigating complaints and spoke to the local safeguarding team.

Inspection team

Mr Mackay

Lead social care inspector

Ms Mayers

Social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

The school is an academy for 893 students aged 11-18 years. It has a sports specialism and boarding provision for up to 50 boarders, there were 38 young people boarding during the inspection. The boarding population is highly diverse with boarders from ten different nationalities. During the inspection year 11 and post 16 students had returned home and 17 Spanish students were experiencing one month in boarding, to enhance their use of English. There is one boarding house with separate levels for male and female students. Access to the boarding house is electronically controlled and discrete surveillance, using monitored cameras, further enhances boarders' safety.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Requires improvement

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people requires improvement. Arrangements for safeguarding in the school have not been sufficiently robust or effective. The safeguarding policy does not provide good guidance to assist staff in ensuring the safety of children and young people, or to safeguard their own practice.

In the boarding house children and young people learn how to stay safe and gradually work towards unsupervised trips into the community. During the inspection the acting principal stopped the use of boarding facilities for student tutors or staff staying late, strengthening the safety of the boarding facility.

Children and young people in boarding make very good progress compared to non-boarders. There is evidence of significant positive educational outcomes for students who board and some children and young people are more interested in this than the remarkable sporting opportunities. The boarding experience also enhances young people's life chances; improving their confidence, decision making, communication skills and sense of self-worth. Staff have good evidence of children and young people's progress which they share with parents keeping them involved in their children's development.

Managers and staff have a good understanding of children and young people's needs, based on the well planned induction process. Consequently staff can effectively plan to meet the varying needs of this highly diverse group of children and young people. Children and young people enjoy being in the setting and say that staff meet all of their personal, cultural and religious needs. They build good relationships with staff and with each other. One young person said, 'We get on well with each other we are like a family.' The good planning at induction also ensures that children new to boarding receive effective support from their fellow residents. One young woman said, 'I was unhappy and cried a lot when I first arrived. I was quickly comforted by the other young women and I never feel homesick now.'

The views of children and young people are central to the running of the boarding house. The director of boarding has been innovative in engaging children and young people in meaningful consultations with impressive results. Children and young people see this as their home and house parents as family members. They are proud of the setting and have a real sense of ownership of the changes they have been instrumental in making. Throughout the house, children and young people showed inspectors examples of major innovations which they had not only suggested but often had planned and implemented. This has involved managing the work and budgets. One attractive and effective example is the colourful bee and butterfly garden they created with assistance from the senior houseparent.

Children and young people are highly active and engage enthusiastically in diverse activities, which they help to plan. They are rightly proud of their community

involvement which is simultaneously improving the environment for local residents and developing resources for the school. They use in-house meetings, called 'student voice' to plan new activities and show creativity and enthusiasm in this. Staff engagement with children and young people is skilled and enables them to find something they enjoy and benefit from. Where they wish to just relax they say that this is possible but they would never be isolated or ignored.

The director of boarding has established positive and effective lines of communication and comment for parents, enabling regular feedback. He has used this feedback from parents, children and young people to develop the service and inspectors viewed many examples of this during the inspection. One highly effective consultation resulted in a range of enhancements and innovations in communication and all elements of student induction. The follow up evaluation of this shows an increase in already high levels of parental approval of the boarding setting.

The quality of care and support

Good

The quality of care and support children and young people receive is good with some outstanding features. Accommodation is of good quality providing a pleasant and welcoming environment, which the children and young people love. The building is brightly decorated and children and young people can personalise their own spaces. Female residents in particular have personalised their living spaces making them comfortable and pleasant places to relax in. Each person has a lockable drawer for storing personal items or they can give these to staff for safe keeping. The drawers are flimsy and do not provide adequate security for valuable items. Children and young people say they can successfully request room changes. One young person said, 'I like everything about here. I wish I could stay another year.'

Staff are accessible at all times and enjoy good relationships with the children and young people. Surveys and observation show that they receive good care from staff, including when they are not well. The house has good facilities for the care of sick children and young people. The management of medication is rigorous and safe and staff encourage children and young people to make personal decisions about their own health care or take responsibility for some interventions where appropriate. For example carrying an inhaler. All children and young people have comprehensive health care plans in place with appropriate permissions for their treatment and care.

The involvement of children and young people in the organisation and management of the boarding house has improved dramatically since the last inspection. The director of boarding, skilfully and creatively, ensures that children and young people have multiple opportunities to make significant differences to the boarding setting. Young people gain confidence, self-assurance, organisational and budget skills through these activities. The total planning of the decoration of one area is an example of this innovation and meaningful engagement of students. Through their student voice meetings they also influence the daily running of the boarding house. Children and young people have developed a real sense of ownership through this. One young person said, 'We may

have to wait and sometimes change does not happen overnight. Sometimes we have to remind staff. The houseparent does his best and we generally get what we are looking for.'

The boarding house has an effective student induction process, including good gathering of all information needed in advance of any admission. The director of boarding has revised the induction process and documentation incorporating feedback from the children and young people. The process has been further refined following surveys with this year's new students and parents. The induction is effectively planned and skilfully incorporates the feedback from all parties improving the engagement and settling of new residents in boarding.

The systems for contacting parents are creative and students say they work in practice. One young person said, 'We have very good contact with home. We can use skype, the house telephone, our own telephones or the house computers. We do not feel homesick because of this.' In addition the director of boarding makes good use of new technology to improve communication with parents. Following feedback from one parent he developed a regular and informative newsletter, improved web site content and created a highly attractive and informative twitter feed on children and young people's activities and achievements. The confidentiality of young people is ensured through appropriate safeguards on the communication systems and engagement of parents in agreeing who can participate. Aided by these communication systems, parents remain in regular and timely contact with their children's progress, activities and needs.

Meal times are relaxed friendly occasions where staff and young people exchange daily news. Meals are plentiful in quantity, nutritious and healthy. Children and young people have access to additional healthy snacks, fruit and drinks. The chef meets regularly with the children and young people to plan menus and ensure that he is meeting all cultural and health considerations. The school has a five star food hygiene rating and standards in the kitchen are effectively maintained at this high level. Staff run cookery classes in the house and the chef also does a termly cooking master class there. Food complaints from children and young people are actioned and the chef spends time in the boarding setting checking that changes meet the original requests. Staff ensure that children and young people who are engaged in extreme physical activity, due to their sporting excellence, are appropriately cared for.

Trips out are well planned and risks appropriately managed to allow and encourage activities rather than hinder them. Activities make good use of school resources and young people's interests. Staff encourage children and young people to make choices and suggest new activities which has resulted in some stunning initiatives. For example the creation of a camping site. Children and young people enjoy the freedom afforded to them to make unsupervised trips into the community. These are appropriately risk assessed taking account of age and other relevant factors. Children and young people develop their existing skills and experience new and exciting activities in boarding.

How well children and young people are protected requires improvement. Inspectors were aware during this inspection that the governors were continuing an investigation into serious allegations regarding a member of staff's interventions in the main school. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate allegations of this kind, actions taken by the school in response to the allegations were considered (where appropriate) alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements. The governors responded promptly to a notification from the local authority safeguarding team about these concerns raised by a parent. Following an initial investigation by the local authority they referred the concerns back to the school for investigation. Governors commissioned an independent external investigation of the allegations and application of school guidelines. The investigation has been rigorous and comprehensive.

The safeguarding policy is incomplete and governors have not ensured that it includes all necessary information to keep children and young people safe. In particular the policy does not include best practice steps when reporting allegations of abuse against the principal. On one occasion the school did not follow guidelines in the policy to safeguard children and young people making allegations about staff conduct. In addition the policy does not include significant parts of the guidance contained in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2014. For example guidance on children missing from education. Staff in the boarding setting have received safeguarding training and evidence a good understanding of how to keep children and young people safe. The boarding setting have established strong systems for tracking children, young people, and where relevant their families, to enhance their safe care. Scrutiny of records show that the school generally maintains good records of child protection concerns and their actions to safeguard children and young people. Interviews with children and young people provided evidence that staff work well with them to keep them informed of risks and how to stay safe.

The director of boarding has significantly improved the recording and analysis of the behaviour of children and young people, and staff interventions to support behaviour management. Using an electronic pen system staff instantly record behaviours and can instantly measure the progress of children and young people. Managers use the system to identify trends and patterns in behaviour, both positive and negative. The responsiveness of the system allows staff to make contemporaneous interventions, reinforcing positives and instantly addressing any dips in performance. Behaviour in the boarding setting is excellent, characterised by mutual respect between staff and children and young people. The school supports the achievements of boarders and has public recognition of their progress, including major awards and granting positions of influence within the school. Consistency in boundary setting combined with effective and positive relationships contribute to well behaved students who show respect to each other, staff and visitors.

As previously noted the director of boarding has refined the induction process and ensures that the staff team can meet all of the children and young people's needs before

they arrive. The boarding house identifies all known risks to the young people and ensures that these are successfully addressed. In addition staff ensure that children and young people know how to make a complaint or how to contact their independent listener. Children and young people say that they feel safe in the setting and have complete trust in staff and fellow residents. They understand how to stay safe in the house and in the local community. They are confident in talking to staff and say they can confide in them. They are very clear that they have virtually unrestricted access to their parents and know how to access the independent listener.

Staff recruitment is well managed and efficiently recorded. The active and highly effective role of children and young people in the appointment process improves the selection of suitable staff. They say that they are listened to, and that their scoring of responses carries equal weight in the appointment. The head of human resources is robust in applying safeguarding controls in the school, enhancing the safe care of the children and young people.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Requires improvement

Not all national minimum standards were met for the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers and the evaluation of evidence led to a judgement of requires improvement. Inspectors were aware of staff and local authority concerns relating to the use of the boarding setting. The chair of governors and the acting principal had acted speedily to address these concerns, commissioning an independent review into them and arranged for inspectors to meet the investigating officer. The use of boarding accommodation for staff and student staff did not afford children and young people the privacy and separation from staff necessary to ensure their safe care. During the inspection the acting principal acted decisively and revised guidelines for the use of accommodation and restricted access to the building to ensure children and young people's safety.

Governors are actively involved in the boarding house and regularly monitor practice, policies, procedures and the environment. During the inspection the lead governor for boarding led a very popular evening activity with children and young people teaching them some elements of camp craft in an entertaining and engaging way. The governor has a good understanding of the setting and the children and young people accommodated. His visits are demanding and have resulted in changes to health and safety measures. In addition he has responsibility for safeguarding and is constantly improving his training and knowledge in this area. Governors receive a well-constructed annual report on the boarding setting which enhances their understanding of the benefits to children and young people. However governors have not identified weaknesses in policies in particular the safeguarding policy. During the inspection the director of boarding made modifications to the medical policy to ensure it accurately reflected the good practice observed.

The director of boarding has suitable qualifications and experience for the role. He is a dynamic, creative and inspirational leader of the setting. The vice principal with responsibility for boarding has fully integrated him into the school management team and the operation of the school. In addition to his role in boarding he is now a highly thought of member of the teaching team. The school share his pride in the boarding setting and the often stunning academic and sporting results for children and young people.

The senior management team ensure that the boarding house has sufficient staff to fulfil its stated aims and objectives. Since the last inspection they have established a strong and dedicated team who share the vision of the director to deliver high quality care to children and young people. They have created a clear management structure in the setting with good succession planning. The recently appointed senior houseparent is experienced in working in the school and the boarding setting and has good experience in counselling and supporting children and young people.

All boarding staff now have regular appraisals of their performance. The director of boarding and vice principal achievement and boarding have proposed including performance targets on boarding for assistant house parents, whose primary job is in the main school, recognising their valued performance in boarding. The director of boarding uses feedback from performance management sessions in his evaluation of the training programme. Consequently the training programme for the coming year focusses strongly on training specific to the setting and in strengthening the staff knowledge of safeguarding principles. The director of boarding has also established a planned induction and support programme which ensures staff are suitably prepared for safely meeting boarding objectives. All staff have completed training suggested at the last inspection to further improve their performance.

Managers have effectively linked House Parents into the school by getting them to conduct daily learning walks. This aids students to settle into class and ensures good sharing of information. The staff work well together providing consistency for the children and young people. The communication with parents about student performance is excellent and the innovation and creativity, shown by the director of boarding in this, has resulted in very positive feedback from parents impressed with the graphic evidence of their children's progress.

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	135004
Social care unique reference number	SC459411
DfE registration number	

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	Boarding School
Number of boarders on roll	933
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	11 to18
Headteacher	Robin Hall Acting Principal
Date of previous boarding inspection	29-30 January 2014
Telephone number	01895 822108
Email address	rhall@theharefieldacademy.org

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