

Brymore Academy

Cannington, Bridgwater, Somerset TA5 2NB

Inspection dates

15 March 2016 to 24 March 2016

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Inadequate **4**

The quality of care and support

Inadequate 4

How well children and young people are protected

Inadequate 4

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Inadequate 4

Summary of key findings

The boarding provision is inadequate because

- Senior leaders, managers and governors have failed to effectively manage safeguarding concerns. Weaknesses are evident in the overall management, decision-making, oversight and record-keeping of child protection matters.
- The records of child protection concerns are not well maintained. Safeguarding referrals to the local authority designated officer lack critical information. Safeguarding records retained by the school do not identify the actions staff take and investigations completed, or describe the information shared with supporting agencies.
- Boarders who have complex needs and are vulnerable are not provided with adequate adult care or the supervision that they need. There is an over-reliance on older boarders, who have responsibilities as student mentors to supervise much younger boarders.
- Leaders and managers do not assess the risks of boarders sharing dormitories together. In addition, care plans and risk assessments lack critical information about boarders' needs, risks and behaviours. Cultural and religious needs are not given sufficient consideration.
- Boarding staff are not provided with adequate training and formal supervision to meet the complex needs of boarders.
- Matrons have not received sufficient training in the management of medication. The dispensing, administration and recording of medication is unsafe. This

weakness in practice has the potential to place boarders at risk of harm.

- A number of national minimum standards are not met. Records are not well maintained or rigorously monitored by senior managers.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

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

- 3.4: Ensure all medication is safely and securely stored and proper records are kept of its administration. Prescribed medicines are given only to the boarders to whom they are prescribed. Boarders allowed to self-medicate are assessed as sufficiently responsible to do so.
- 5.1: Ensure suitable sleeping accommodation is provided for boarders. Ensure it is well organised and managed with risk assessments undertaken and findings acted upon to reduce risk for all boarders.
- 6.3: Ensure that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy and that appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.
- 10.3: Ensure that where there are unusual or especially onerous demands on boarders, that these are appropriate to the boarders concerned and do not affect their welfare.
- 11.1: Ensure 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.
- 13.1: Ensure that the school's governing body and/or proprietor monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school, and takes appropriate action where necessary.
- 13.4: Ensure that the school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met.
- 13.8: Ensure that the records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate.
- 13.9: Ensure that the issues specified in Appendix 3 are monitored, and action is taken to improve outcomes for children as appropriate.
- 15.1: Ensure that 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.

- 18.1: Ensure that the school has, and follows, an appropriate policy on recording and responding to complaints that is compliant with the relevant regulatory standards.

Information about this inspection

The school was notified of the inspection on the morning of 15 March 2016. Inspectors arrived at 11.20am. The inspectors visited the residential provision, observed staff and boarders' interaction and met with boarders and with the residential staff. In addition, the inspectors scrutinised a variety of records, documents and policies and procedures.

The inspectors were aware during this inspection that serious allegations of a child protection nature were being investigated by external authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate allegations of this kind, actions taken by senior staff in response to the allegation were considered (where appropriate), alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection, to inform the judgement reached

Inspection team

Sharron Escott

lead social care inspector

Michelle Oxley

regulatory inspection manager

Full report

Information about this school

Brymore School of Rural Technology is a single-sex school for boys which was established in 1952. The school is a maintained state boarding school. Education is free and there is a modest charge for boarding provision. The school offers an opportunity for boys from 11 to 17 years of age to develop their knowledge of farming, horticulture, engineering and sports. The school has a capacity for 150 boarders. At the time of this inspection, there were 131 boarders. The school is broadly Christian, with an ethos based on resilience, responsibility and resourcefulness.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Inadequate

In 2015, the school extended its boarding provision to include Year 7 and Year 8 pupils, some of whom have complex needs. Leaders and managers have not ensured that there are sufficient adults to care for these younger and vulnerable boarders. Historically, leaders and managers have used older boarders to take responsibility, as student mentors, for other boarders. This arrangement has continued without being reviewed or adjusted to take account of the increase in younger boarders and those who have complex needs. As a result, the behaviour and well-being of younger boarders continue to be predominately managed and closely monitored by older boarders. As a consequence, boarders with complex care needs, including needs arising from mental ill health, autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, do not receive the required level of adult care, attention or supervision. This arrangement is risky and places too much responsibility on student mentors.

Senior leaders have failed to ensure that staff receive sufficient training to support the boarders' needs. Staff have not received training in autistic spectrum disorders, mental ill health, self-harm, sexual health or sexually harmful behaviours. As a result, staff are not equipped with the necessary technical knowledge and skills to enable them to provide the best possible care.

New boarders receive sufficient information and opportunities to visit the boarding house prior to boarding at the school. Boarding staff work in partnership with parents to help boarders settle and to reduce any home sickness. Boarders are able to maintain good contact with family and friends using a variety of methods, including by telephone, email, Facetime and Skype.

Boarders have good opportunities to develop their health and well-being through a good range of physical activities. Boarders are motivated and keep themselves fit. Boarders told the inspectors that the boarding experience helps them to develop their confidence, skills and independence. Boarders have very good opportunities to develop skills for work. They gain practical experience of farming and have opportunities to work in the school's own forge. During the inspection, boarders showed inspectors the excellent range of projects they had been working on in design technology lessons and after school. Staff have high aspirations for pupils. All boarders spoken with could identify their career ambitions and knew how they would achieve them.

The boarding houses are well maintained, personalised and well resourced. Boarders are able to individualise their sleeping area and are encouraged to express their views and share any ideas that they may have to enhance the boarding provision.

The quality of care and support

Inadequate

Formal assessments have not been completed to determine the sleeping arrangements of boarders. Staff have not assessed the impact of a boarder's needs and behaviours, and the risk that one boarder may pose to another.

Senior leaders have developed boarding care and support plans for some boarders with complex care needs. However, these plans do not include significant information about some boarders' care requirements. A range of information is omitted from a number of plans, including how to deal with pupils' emerging sexuality, self-harming behaviours, autistic spectrum needs, and religious and cultural needs. As a result, there is a lack of strategic planning for boarders' complex care needs and some boarders at risk and who are vulnerable, are not having their needs met. In addition, not all boarders are afforded sufficient privacy because their personal targets are displayed in the shared dormitories.

Boarders are supported to respect others and develop tolerance through living together in a group. Student mentors appropriately challenge the views and behaviour of boarders when conflict arise, including challenging bullying and racism. They are good role models. However, the level of responsibility they have for overseeing the care of younger boarders is onerous

Boarders spoken to say that they are proud of their achievements and rate their boarding experience as good. They can identify someone to speak to if they are worried or concerned. Good use is made by pupils of the 'whisper' reporting system to alert staff to worries or concerns. Bullying is not a problem at the school. Boarders say that they look out for each other. They are confident that their personal items are safe. In the main, the boarders presented as happy and confident young people.

Boarders' dining experiences have improved since the previous inspection. The dining hall has been relocated and is now spacious, light and airy. The quality and quantity of food at mealtimes have improved significantly. Boarders enjoy wholesome and nutritious food and their dietary needs are known by staff and catered for well. Most boarders are positive about the quality of food provided and say that they can help themselves to a second portion. Boarders can access a range of snacks and drinks in between meals.

How well children and young people are protected

Inadequate

Records maintained by senior leaders relating to safeguarding and child protection are inadequate. Critical information is missing; actions taken by leaders are not comprehensively evidenced and crucial information has, on occasions, been omitted from referrals made to the external agencies responsible for safeguarding children. As a result, boarders are at risk of not receiving the support, protection and services they may need. New systems for boarders to report any concerns, complaints and safeguarding matters have been implemented and these are frequently used. Senior leaders meet daily to review concerns and behavioural incidents. Collectively, they agree on the actions to take and, on occasion, consult external agencies and parents. The recording of these meetings is weak. There is no audit trail of decision-making, therefore, senior leaders cannot always evidence that suitable action was taken to

ensure the safety and welfare of boarders.

The management and monitoring of medication is unsafe. Matrons who dispense and administer medication have not received suitable training. As a result, medication is incorrectly handled and sterile containers for dispensing medication are not used. There is an increased risk of medication being contaminated. In addition, matrons do not record the amount of prescription medication coming into or leaving the school. As a result, medication stock balances are unknown.

The processes for assessing and managing risks to boarders are inadequate. Leaders and managers fail to identify and record high-risk factors relating to the risk of sexual exploitation, self-harming behaviours and gang crime. Strategies to mitigate these risks are insufficient and as a result, boarders are vulnerable.

Boarders report that they feel safe, both in the boarding houses and school. The behaviour management system is used effectively by staff when incidents significantly impact on boarders' progress or safety.

Boarders benefit from the help staff give them to develop their understanding of bullying, discriminatory behaviours and radicalisation. This work is linked to the 'Prevent' strategy. E-safety is well managed and safeguarding filters are used when boarders access the school's wi-fi. Good work is undertaken with boarders to develop their understanding and the skills to keep themselves safe online.

Boarders, staff and visitors are kept safe by the staff team's good management of health and safety. Fire evacuation procedures are known and understood by boarders through regular practice at varying times of the day. Robust monitoring of equipment, and checks of the grounds and accommodation ensure that boarders are in a safe environment.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Inadequate

Senior leaders and managers have failed to adequately manage the increase in the number of boarders who are younger and have more complex needs. The staffing ratio to care for these boarders is too low. There is an over-reliance on student mentors to manage younger boarders and take responsibility for their welfare concerns and complex health needs.

Governors, senior leaders and managers have failed to monitor rigorously the quality of the records maintained by the school. As a result, they have failed to identify a number of shortfalls and discrepancies in the records relating to safeguarding and complaints. Governors regularly visit the boarding provision, spend time with boarders and staff, and review emerging patterns and trends of behaviours. Senior leaders are visible and accessible to boarders and boarding staff.

Senior leaders have failed to ensure that staff have the required training and knowledge, to look after and manage the increased number of younger boarders and those with more complex needs. In addition, boarding staff, are not provided with formal supervision. As a result, opportunities to review and reflect upon their practice are missed.

A suitable complaints procedure is in place. However, the senior leaders do not always follow it. In some cases, the records of complaint investigations lack detail of the action staff take in response to the complaint. As a result, leaders' ability to oversee the complaints effectively, to establish that a satisfactory resolution has been reached and that boarders are fully protected, is limited.

The aims and objectives of the school's boarding principles, what facilities it provides and its practices are clearly defined in information available to parents and staff. Since the previous inspection, a new director of boarding has been appointed. She has consolidated the communication systems and improved the links between the boarding staff and senior leadership team. A pastoral manager has been appointed and is due to start working at the school in April 2016. Leaders have made this appointment in recognition of the need to strengthen the management arrangements for the increased number of boarders.

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	123903
Social care unique reference number	SC042165
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	131
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	11 to 17
Headteacher	Mr Mark Thomas
Date of previous boarding inspection	22 November 2012
Telephone number	01278 652369
Email address	MThomas4@educ.somerset.gov.uk

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