

Newbury Hall

NEWBURY HALL,
ENBOURNE ROAD,
NEWBURY,
BERKSHIRE
RG14 6AD

Inspection dates	20 May 2015 to 22 May 2015
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Overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Inadequate
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Quality of care and support	Requires Improvement
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How well children and young people are protected	Inadequate
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Impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate
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Summary of key findings

The boarding provision is inadequate because

- There is a lack of senior strategic management and oversight of boarding practice. Governors, who are employed by the school's umbrella organisation, rarely visit the school and do not demonstrate sufficient knowledge or understanding of the application of the national minimum standards for boarding schools.
- The lack of investment in staff, demonstrated by insecure employment, cutting of hours and lack of funds for direct training, for example, has led to staff feeling undervalued and demoralised. Despite this the core staff team has established and maintained good relationships with students and are concerned for their well-being.
- Recruitment practice is poor. Leaders and managers cannot be confident that only suitable staff are employed.
- Safeguarding and risk assessment practice is insufficiently robust and not all staff have received the training necessary. Policies relating to safeguarding do not use current statutory guidance.
- The range of matters to be recorded and monitored is not maintained.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

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

NMS 5.4 Boarding houses and other accommodation provided for boarders is appropriately lit, heated and ventilated, cleaned and maintained, and reasonable adjustments are made to provide adequate accessible accommodation for any boarders with restricted mobility.

NMS 3.4 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.

NMS 11.1 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 13.1 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.

NMS 6.3 The school ensures 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 appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

NMS 12.1 The school has and consistently implements a written policy to promote good behaviour amongst pupils. This policy includes:

- measures to combat bullying, including cyberbullying, and to promote positive behaviour;
- school rules;
- disciplinary sanctions;
- when restraint, including reasonable force, is to be used and how this will be recorded and managed; and
- arrangements for searching pupils and their possessions.

NMS 14.1 Schools operate safe recruitment and adopt recruitment procedures in line with the regulatory requirements and having regard to relevant guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

NMS 14.4 All persons visiting boarding accommodation (e.g. visitors, outside delivery and maintenance personnel) are kept under sufficient staff supervision to prevent them gaining substantial unsupervised access to boarders or their accommodation.

NMS 13.1 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.

NMS 13.4 The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met.

NMS 13.5 The school's leadership and management and governance actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.

NMS 13.8 The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate.

NMS 13.9 The issues specified in Appendix 3 are monitored, and action is taken to improve outcomes for children as appropriate.

NMS 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.

NMS 20.1 Any lodgings arranged by the school to accommodate pupils provide satisfactory accommodation and supervision, are checked before use, and are monitored by the school during use including checks at least yearly.

NMS 20.3 Schools alert the local authority to any arrangements made by the school that may constitute private fostering.

NMS 20.5 The school visits all potential lodgings it may arrange, and interviews any adult who will be responsible for the accommodation of the pupils in each lodging, takes up references, and has recorded a satisfactory assessment, before any pupil is placed there. The school can demonstrate that members of the host family aged over 16 are subject to a DBS check completed at the standard level, with a satisfactory outcome known before any pupil is placed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- review the communal accommodation to ensure sufficiency to meet students' social needs
- ensure that the plans for students contain the detail required for staff to meet their needs
- demonstrate how students views are acted upon and taken into account

Information about this inspection

Ofsted carried out this inspection with two hours' notice. Inspection activities included: observation of boarding practice over two evenings; formal group meetings with boarders, as well as informal discussion during shared meals; meetings and discussions with the Principal, the head of boarding and boarding and ancillary staff; contact with the local statutory safeguarding authority; a tour of the accommodation; and scrutiny of the wide ranging documentation about boarding. There were no responses on Parent View and just one pupil response to Ofsted's point-in-time surveys.

Inspection team

Maire Atherton

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Newbury Hall School in Berkshire is a non-affiliated independent international boarding school. It provides exclusively for students from outside the United Kingdom, aged from 13 to 18 years for whom English is an additional language. The school provides boarding accommodation for its students, either in purpose-built facilities on site or with host families in the Newbury area. The on-site accommodation is one boarding house, with male and female accommodation on separate floors.

There are 39 students on roll, boys and girls. Students may join the school at any point in the academic year, with a minimum stay of six weeks. The school's central purpose is to enable students to improve their use of the English language and gain GCSE and A-level qualifications.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people **Inadequate**

This judgement is limited to inadequate because the judgement of 'how well children and young people are protected' is inadequate. This relates to poor recruitment and safeguarding practices which are detailed in that section of this report.

Staff can verbally outline the academic and personal progress made by individual students but this is not routinely recorded or evaluated. Students are very positive about their range of experiences and talk enthusiastically about these and how their confidence has improved, as has their fluency in spoken English.

Leaders and managers have limited time to focus on strategic development and improvements because they are fully engaged in the day-to-day tasks when on duty. Because staff make the students their priority they have been able to build strong relationships. This supports effective behaviour management and students' behaviour is of a high standard. Staff have a good understanding of the needs of the students, but this is not always supported by relevant training. Students also have good relationships with each other, demonstrating an acceptance and appreciation of racial and cultural difference.

There are no formal complaints recorded. Students say that minor issues are addressed promptly. Regular house meetings are held where students are encouraged to express their thoughts and opinions. The systems for feeding back to students the outcome of their requests is insufficiently robust. As a result students do not always feel listened to.

The structured activity programme, currently included in the fees, provides students with a wide variety of opportunities, both individually and as groups. Students are enthusiastic about these and can express and demonstrate through performance how they have grown in confidence as a direct result of their involvement. The future of the programme is not secure as a number have been removed from inclusion in the fees. A planned weekend away, as part of induction week, has been cancelled by the Principal.

Students' health is generally effectively promoted by staff with good links to healthcare professionals. There are some deficits in the recording and administration of occasionally prescribed medication.

There is limited engagement with parents and guardians, mainly because the majority of guardians and parents do not respond to contact from the school, perhaps due to language challenges. The Principal has promoted a variety of methods of engagement, for example, using social media securely for photos and videos. Where there is a response staff engage positively in the best interests of the students. The Principal has identified this as an area for development in his action plan.

Quality of care and support

Requires Improvement

Student's needs are very well understood by the boarding staff. Staff have considerable knowledge of each and every student but this is not reflected in the records maintained. Students say that there is always someone available to talk to. 'You get the attention you want and get to know the staff, and the head of boarding is like an uncle'. There is an independent listener appointed by the school. Students know who she is and how to get in touch should they wish to.

There is a clear and effective induction programme. A power point presentation to small groups delivered by boarding staff is described as helpful by students, particularly as it is enlivened by activities. For example an orientation trip to Newbury provides an introduction to the local area. A young person said 'the rules are simple and easy to remember'. The information is well disseminated through posters and written information for students in their handbook.

The small and tightly knit boarding staff team work well together and have good links with academic staff. There are regular verbal handovers supported by concise daily written reports. Staff are sensitive to students' individual needs. Staff have a strong awareness of difference, reflected in the composition of the staff team, and encourage and enable the diverse student group to celebrate difference. The staff support young people to build self-confidence and boost their self-esteem. For example, students who were initially very shy, were getting ready to perform at a talent showcase towards the end of term.

Boarding accommodation is in a purpose built block over four floors, with appropriate gender separation. All boarding students were in single rooms at the time of this visit. These are small but have en-suite facilities, a cabin-style bed, desk, chair and storage space. Rooms may only be opened with a personalised swipe card, thus keeping students' possessions safe. The two small communal rooms in the boarding house are no longer used for this purpose, with one being used for laundry, another for storage. Some students said that they would like these to be re-introduced so that they could use a kettle in the boarding house, without having to ask staff, although facilities in the dining hall are very close to hand. There is a programme underway to replace the showers in all the bedrooms but there is not an overall maintenance plan. The corridors and stairwells are showing signs of heavy wear and tear and window blinds are broken and/or stained in some rooms. Communal accommodation comprises the first floor dining hall with a television, table tennis and several sofas at one end and the school kitchen at the other with tables and chairs in between. This room is also used for school assemblies and performances. Additional socialising space is provided in a smaller room on ground floor in school, also with a television and sofas and a pool table in the middle of the room. Students may use the school library, when it is not set up for exams, as it was at the time of this visit. Students report that the communal accommodation is not always sufficient for their different social needs; this may have been felt due the library being inaccessible at the time of this visit.

The activity programme, introduced this year has provided young people with an excellent range of activities. The in-house programme leaders have successfully

encouraged students to try new things. As a result, students have learnt new skills and developed new interests. These include Dj-ing; singing and piano lessons on an individual basis, cookery and membership of local groups in the community, for example, football and drama. The programme works alongside the development of a healthy lifestyle as students participate in a range of physical activities. For example, gym membership is popular, as are football and running, and staff exercise alongside students. All these activities take place off-site using community facilities.

Staff have established strong links with the local GP practice, a dentist and optician who are accessed when necessary. Although staff have not needed to test access to specialist services, such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health or counselling the Principal has identified this as an area for development in his plan for next year. The systems for the administration and audit of non-prescribed medication are sound. This is not the case for prescribed medication. The storage of medication is not sufficiently secure.

Students have input to the menu and are very complimentary about the food provided for them. They describe the meals served from Monday to Friday as 'excellent'. The in-house caterers prepare meals using fresh ingredients and are aware of and responsive to dietary requirements as well as religious and cultural needs. The meals at weekends are not viewed as positively, as there is more reliance on freezer food in recognition of the workload of just one member of staff in the kitchen. Mealtimes are social occasions with many positive interactions as students relax and chat.

Staff give students a range of opportunities, both formal, through one-to-one meetings, house meetings and the use of a suggestions box, and informally to express their thoughts and views. Staff use a form with individual students termly to get their views on boarding. However, the action taken in response to issues raised as a result of this good practice is not recorded, so failing to demonstrate how students' views are acted on. Students sometimes report not feeling listened to. Staff say this is because they cannot meet the students' requests, for a later bedtime for example. It is unclear how this information is shared with students.

Students are prompted and encouraged to contact their parents regularly and do so using social media.

How well children and young people are protected

Inadequate

Managers in the school do not securely evidence a sound understanding of child protection. Although staff can outline the action they took to follow up a potential child protection concern there was no record of this response. Host families are not trained in safeguarding and child protection. Senior leaders in the school have undertaken safeguarding training relevant to their role, however this is not true for all boarding staff. The school has moved to on-line training. There is no assessment how well staff understand and know how to implement this training so that leaders can be confident that staff would recognise child protection issues and know the appropriate course of action to take should they have concerns. The designated safeguarding lead and deputy can outline what they have done but this is not supported by the records or in conversation with students. The school is not using current statutory guidance on safeguarding. There is no evidence that governors monitor safeguarding practice in the

school and although the policy was reviewed in January this year, safeguarding statutory guidance has been updated since then.

Although leaders report no instances of a student going missing, one such incident is recorded in governors' meeting minutes last year. The applicable policy does not make reference to the statutory guidance for children and young people who are missing from home and/or education.

Staff refer to the 'Newbury Hall bubble' as students have limited experience of life in this country outside the school and the school routines offer minimal opportunities for local age-appropriate risk taking to further their personal development. However the students successfully travel independently overseas. Although local police come in to the school to talk to students about how to keep themselves safe, the lack of training for staff in child sexual exploitation and e-safety means that they are ill-equipped to identify any such concerns or fully support students in these areas. The risk assessment process is insufficiently developed; where risks have been identified there is limited evidence of written risk assessments to inform the boarding staff about strategies to minimise the risk.

Students' behaviour in the boarding house and around school is very good and excellent relationships form the basis of sound behaviour management. When asked about sanctions students say there are very few. One said, 'staff are more likely to talk to you to find out what the problem is, than give a sanction'. Although leaders reported no major sanctions governors' meeting minutes record three exclusions since the last full inspection in 2011. Any use of restraint has not been recorded. Policies which refer to the use of restraint are not consistent. One policy states that staff will be trained how to use restraint and another says restraint will not be used, this contradiction will confuse staff.

Recruitment practices in respect of staff and host families fail to protect students from potentially unsafe people. The full range of checks required is not undertaken. Eleven files were sampled, including teaching, residential and ancillary staff and host families; none were fully compliant with the applicable statutory guidance.

The school and boarding environment is safe and secure and students say this makes them feel safe. There is external CCTV monitoring. Access to boarding accommodation is restricted by the use of individually programmed swipe cards. Students may only access the floor their room is on and this is outside teaching time. Access at other times requires staff permission. There is no routine supervision of maintenance personnel who have been issued with swipe cards. Fire systems and other environmental safeguards are tested and maintained as required. The systems for ensuring students know about local road safety are robust.

The school leaders have contact details of relevant personnel in local authority. To date the contact has comprised of an annual self-audit requested by and submitted to the local authority designated person.

This is the sole boarding school run by the organisation of which it is part. Since the last inspection there have been two changes of Principal and one change to the head of boarding. A board of governors was established in October 2013. The Principal is experienced in running a language school not required to be registered with the Department for Education as a boarding school. The head of boarding is experienced in working in a residential setting. He has undertaken some relevant training and has worked on familiarising himself and his team with the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. However, they and the governing body have insufficient knowledge of these to effectively monitor, challenge and develop boarding practice in the school.

Staff are aspirational for students but this is difficult to achieve with resources allocated. The increased stability in the boarding staff team over the past year is due to the personal dedication of individuals, led by the example of the head of boarding. The residential staff, who are not on formal contracts but paid on an hourly rate, work long hours. Staff said that there has been a recent reduction in their planned hours of work. Students report that there are enough staff on duty. This and the small size of the site mean that staff are aware of and respond promptly to any conflicts arising; students do not report any bullying. The sufficiency of staffing is achieved because staff are very flexible and respond to changing needs. However, it is not clear if sufficient staff are on duty as the standard rota does not detail all staff, with some question marks where there should be names, particularly at weekends. The Head of Student Services left in November 2014 and was not replaced. The responsibilities allocated to that post were passed to other already hard-pressed staff. This included staff recruitment and vetting, where significant shortfalls have been identified.

The head of boarding has led the staff team in a review of their practice against the National Minimum Standards. From this they have identified areas of strength as well as those for development. However, the evaluation of practice is based on staff feedback rather than wider auditing, for example of staff recruitment, which does not lead to improvements. There has been no recent recruitment and limited use of existing host families due to lack of demand. This has led to practice deficits, in respect of the need to alert the local authority to private fostering arrangements, the training needs of host families and the required checks for all family members over 16 years. There is also a lack of information management systems. Thus information about any exclusions or students missing is limited to what is remembered or recorded in disparate documents.

There is very limited external scrutiny by governors or the proprietor. Staff report a lack of visibility of Governors in the school, although the Principal reports the Chair visits monthly. Of the governing body, all but one are employed by the owner, who also sits on the board. Those with allocated responsibilities review the applicable policies but not in a meaningful way as they do not take account of current guidance. The last governors' meeting minutes available date from September 2014. This limited oversight means that there is not sufficient strategic review of the work of the Principal. The Principal has a draft development plan ready to share with governors.

The small staff team provide students with consistency and stability. Boarding staff feel

well supported informally, with regular one-to-one and team meetings, but formal systems are not well embedded in practice. Some, but not all, staff have had an appraisal in the past year. Although some staff have attended external training and the Principal says it is still available staff believe that the move to on-line learning is finance led. There is considerable variation in staff accessing on-line training materials, with some doing very few and others more. There is no evidence of management evaluation to see if the training undertaken is implemented in practice or leads to improvement. There is no evidence that staff training is responsive to potential emerging needs, the management of self-harm or sex and sexuality for example.

There have been improvements to the boarding experience for students at the school. However the last full social care inspection in October 2011 rated the school as inadequate. A monitoring visit in May 2012 determined that all the shortfalls had been addressed. This improvement in addressing the shortfalls from 2011 has not been sustained.

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	135819
Social care unique reference number	SC382720
DfE registration number	869/6016

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	Non-affiliated Independent Boarding School
Number of boarders on roll	39
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	13-19
Headteacher	Mr Jon Crocker
Date of previous boarding inspection	4 May 2012
Telephone number	01635 36879
Email address	jon.crocker@newburyhall.com

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Manchester
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