

The Springfields Academy

Springfields School, Curzon Street, CALNE, Wiltshire, SN11 0DS

Inspection dates

09/03/2016

Context of the inspection

The residential provision was judged to be inadequate at the full inspection on 30 September 2015. At that inspection weaknesses were evident in how well young people are protected and in the effectiveness of leaders and managers. As a result, 16 national minimum standards were identified as not being met.

This unannounced monitoring visit was undertaken to assess the progress leaders and managers have made to remedy the previous weaknesses.

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

The senior leaders' action plan includes targets to improve the academy's safeguarding practices and the quality of teaching and learning, with an additional focus on developing effective monitoring systems and the quality of record keeping. Although progress has been made, weaknesses in these areas were still evident at this monitoring visit. Five national minimum standards (NMS) have been met and 11 continue to require further work. Three of these NMS relate to one standard.

Systems to report and share safeguarding concerns have improved. Information is now shared with the relevant agencies. However, the records documenting the actions staff members take are not always recorded. Internal investigations are not always completed promptly.

The national minimum standards pertaining to major sanctions and behaviour management have been reviewed. The headteacher described implementing a whole school approach to promoting positive behaviour that is focused more on rewards than sanctions. This approach is not yet evident in the residential provision. Records of sanctions that residential staff give to pupils are now documented. Typically, staff members issue a punitive sanction rather than using a restorative approach to help pupils to learn from incidents. The use of these sanctions has not been challenged by the residential managers.

Written records indicate that the management of residential pupils' behaviour during education times is inconsistent. Pupils are moved or instructed to leave the classroom

when they are not following instructions or are disruptive. Pupils are required to go to the 'break out room' that is located in a separate building adjacent to their classrooms. As a result of these responses, pupils are moved when they are in a heightened state of anxiety and isolated from their peers. The opportunity for pupils to re-integrate back into the lesson is missed. Despite a previous national minimum standard failure and senior leaders'/governors' direction to make improvements, some staff do not seek the views of pupils following an incident. As a result, pupils do not always have the time to reflect on and learn from their behaviour to identify ways to prevent a recurring incident. Overall physical intervention has reduced, in particular the use of face down holds on the floor.

Systems to ensure the safe management of medication remain ineffective. Since the previous inspection, a health care professional has been appointed, residential staff have completed a medication handling course and a new system to record the administration of medication has been introduced. In addition, the academy commissioned an external inspection to quality assure the practice changes that had been implemented. During the Ofsted monitoring visit one residential pupil's medication chart included an incorrect description of the dosage he requires. Five different staff failed to identify this discrepancy despite administering the medication for six days. Auditing processes are insufficient as the error was only identified by the inspector during this visit on her review of medication. The residential managers took action to deal with this concern during the monitoring visit and no reported harm was caused to the young person.

Each residential pupil now has a care and risk management plan. This document is now collated centrally enabling all staff to access the most up-to-date and accurate version. One plan reviewed during the monitoring visit failed to provide specific strategies to direct staff in how to manage and reduce a serious risk. Residential managers have not undertaken sufficient work since the previous inspection to formally assess the risks pupils may present when living together. The new care and risk management plan does not include an assessment of the impact young people's behaviours and risks may have on each other. Staff members continue to use their knowledge of risks posed by individual pupils rather than recording this information formally.

Improved systems are now in place for residential pupils to raise complaints and concerns with staff. Records from two of the residences were incomplete as they did not confirm the action staff had taken in response to some complaints or whether the complainant was satisfied with the outcome. The residential manager is aware of this weakness and said the responses were not being provided in the timeframes set out in the complaints policy.

An independent visitor has been appointed who now monitors the residential provision every month and provides additional challenge and mentoring for the residential manager. In addition to the independent visitor, the governors are now regularly and more purposefully monitoring the quality of care. Monitoring visit reports are informative and objective, providing senior staff with clear actions to improve. Senior staff are acting on the recommendations from these visits.

Leaders and managers have remedied the previous weaknesses identified in the recruitment files for volunteer staff. Managers are now assured that volunteers' qualifications and experience is checked and references are sought. One new member of

staff has been appointed since the previous inspection. All required statutory checks were undertaken before he started work at the academy. The verifying of references requires further improvement to ensure that this process is sufficiently rigorous, to help managers to determine a person's suitability when references only provide limited information.

Good progress has been made by leaders and managers in dealing with the previous weaknesses in the quality of residential staff supervision and the quality of accommodation for pupils.

Residential staff now receive more purposeful supervision from managers, including better opportunities to discuss the quality and impact of their work. Clear targets to improve are set. These targets link well to meeting the national minimum standards and improving the experiences of pupils. As a result, staff members are now being held more accountable for the quality of their work.

A detailed maintenance plan is in place to ensure the residential accommodation is more warm, welcoming and homely. Improvements already completed enrich the residential experience of pupils. For example; the redecoration of communal rooms, the refurbishment of some bathrooms and a reduction in the number of shared bedrooms. Further improvements are planned.

Each residential pupil now has an allocated key worker that is responsible for overseeing their care and being available to them as a trusted adult. Pupils have chosen their preferred key worker.

National minimum standards

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for boarding (residential special) schools

- 3.6 The school has, and implements effectively, appropriate policies for the care of children who are unwell, and ensures that children's physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing is promoted. These include first aid, care of those with chronic conditions and disabilities, administration of medicines (including controlled drugs) and dealing with medical emergencies. Policies for administration of medication should reflect guidance provided by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (Handling of Medicines in Social Care).
- 5.1 Suitable sleeping accommodation is provided for children. It is well organised and managed with risk assessments undertaken and the findings acted upon to reduce risk for all children. Where children are aged 8 years or over, sleeping accommodation for boys is separate from sleeping accommodation for girls.
- 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.

- 11.1 The school ensures that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 12.4 Methods to de-escalate confrontations or potentially challenging behaviour are used wherever appropriate to avoid use of restraint, including reasonable force. Restraint, including reasonable force, is only used in exceptional circumstances, to prevent injury to any person, including the child, or to prevent serious damage to the property of any person, including the child's, or to prevent the child leaving the school's premises where this may lead to the child injuring themselves or others. Restraint in relation to a child must be necessary and proportionate.
- 12.5 All children and staff are given an opportunity to discuss with a relevant adult (who was not directly involved) within 24 hours incidents of restraint, including reasonable force, they have been involved in, witnessed or been affected by.
- 12.6 A written record is kept of major sanctions and the use of any reasonable force. Records include the information in Appendix 2 (use of reasonable force). The record is made within 24 hours and is legible. Children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records. The school regularly reviews any instances of the use of reasonable force and examines trends or issues to enable staff to reflect and learn in a way that will inform future practice.
- 13.4 The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met.
- 13.8 The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate.
- 13.9 The issues specified in Appendix 3 are monitored, and action taken to improve outcomes for children as appropriate.
- 18.1 The school has, and follows, an appropriate policy on recording and responding to complaints that is compliant with the relevant regulatory requirements.

Inspection team

Sharron Escott

Lead social care inspector

Paula Lahey

Social care regulatory inspection manager

Information about this school

The school received academy status in September 2011. Springfields Academy offers provision for pupils experiencing difficulties in mainstream education as a result of a combination of emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties. It also provides tuition in externally accredited vocational subjects for day pupils. Springfields can provide residential accommodation for pupils of both genders at any one time, ranging in age from nine to 16 years. Three out of the four residential units on the academy site are in use. All residential pupils return home at weekends and during academy holidays. The academy is situated in a rural town in Wiltshire. The previous full inspection of the residential provision was in September 2015.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 137470 |
| Social care unique reference number | SC039093 |
| 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.

The inspection was conducted at the request of the Registration Authority for independent schools in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan following the previous inspection.

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| Type of school | Residential Special School |
| Number of boarders on roll | 51 |
| Gender of boarders | Mixed |
| Age range of boarders | 9 to 16 |
| Headteacher | Mr J Hamp |
| Date of previous boarding inspection | 30 September 2015 |
| Telephone number | 01249 814125 |
| Email address | admin@springfields.wilts.sch.uk |

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