

# De Aston School

De Aston School, Willingham Road, Market Rasen, Lincolnshire LN8 3RF

<b>Inspection dates</b>	7 June 2016 to 9 June 2016	
<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of care and support	Good	2
How well children and young people are protected	Good	2
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good	2

## Summary of key findings

### The boarding provision is good because

- It has positively affected children's and young people's lives in many ways, particularly in improvements in their education and self-confidence.
- Children and young people enjoy their time in boarding provision, and those who are older look back with pride at their achievements.
- The arrangements for keeping children and young people safe are very effective.
- There are a lot of opportunities for children and young people to participate in a wide range of activities that are based upon their interests and allows them to realise their talents.
- The head of care is particularly committed, skilled and passionate about his work, leading a very positive culture in the boarding provision.
- Boarders make good progress in all areas of their development, and experience success, supporting them to be ambitious.
- The governing body is strong and ensures that each aspect of the boarding provision is effective.
- Children and young people particularly benefit from developing positive friendships and a high level of respect for others.

## **Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools**

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

National minimum standard 5.1: Suitable sleeping accommodation is provided for boarders. It is well organised and managed with risk assessments undertaken and findings acted upon to reduce risk for all boarders. This shortfall is in particular relation to a bathroom in the girls' accommodation needing improvement.

National minimum standard 6.2: The school premises accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health safety and welfare of pupils are ensured. This shortfall is in relation to low-level opening windows in boarders' bedrooms on the first floor and a low windowsill at the top of a staircase, just outside bedroom areas.

## **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

Ensure that medication is correctly labelled with the young person's own name to reduce the risk of an error.

Improve care planning to ensure that children's and young people's plans set out how their needs will be met at the school.

## Information about this inspection

This inspection was announced on the morning of the first day. The boarding provision, which is on the same premises as the main school, was inspected. Group and individual discussions took place with children and young people. In addition, staff, leaders and managers, parents and governors were spoken to. Comments from parents on Parent View were taken into consideration. The school's policies, and children's and young people's records, were scrutinised. The inspectors shared a meal with children and young people and engaged in discussions with them during the late afternoon and evening, when they were in residence.

## Inspection team

Caroline Brailsford	Lead social care regulatory inspector
Amanda Ellis	Social care regulatory inspector
Cathey Moriarty	Social care regulatory inspector.

## **Full report**

### **Information about this school**

De Aston School provides education and boarding accommodation for 80 children and young people, with separate sleeping areas for boys and girls. Accommodation is provided in a large Victorian house, which is a listed building, situated in pleasant and spacious grounds in close proximity to the school. Children and young people can benefit from school facilities outside of school hours. The local market town of Market Rasen is a short walk away, and where all local amenities are easily accessible. Good transport links are available to the city of Lincoln and the larger town of Grimsby. De Aston School has the status of a non-maintained school.

## Inspection judgements

### The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

**Good**

The residential provision is very well organised. It is run for the benefit of children and young people, who make extremely good progress at this school. They feel very proud to be at this school and recognise the positive difference that boarding has made to them personally. They take particular pride in the progress they make in developing improved confidence and in educational achievement.

The wide range of extra-curricular activities broadens the boarding experience for children and young people. Their interests develop and they begin to recognise what they are good at, significantly developing their confidence and self-esteem.

The culture of respect is driven by staff, at every level, who feel supported in their work. They are motivated to make sure that the boarding experience is safe and positive. The head of care is particularly inspirational to staff and boarders and ensures that support and help to boarders is always good.

The large majority of national minimum standards are met. The areas that are not met do not detract from the positive care and experiences the boarders receive.

### The quality of care and support

**Good**

Children and young people enjoy their time living at the school and feel that their lives are enriched because of the boarding experience. They live alongside and learn from students from other parts of the world and from other cultures, teaching them to respect others and to live harmoniously. As a result, their behaviour is good and relationships between boarding staff and children and young people are also good. Boarding staff are instrumental in teaching a culture of respect. They listen and respond fairly to children and young people. Incidents do not get blown up out of proportion and are dealt with reasonably and fairly. Staff know boarders exceptionally well and meet their needs very effectively.

Boarding gives another dimension to children and young people's education and statistics show those that board achieve slightly higher results in education than non-boarding children and young people. Children and young people overcome personal challenges to go on to do well in their education. For example, despite complex health needs, they can achieve very good results and progress to studying at universities. Children and young people also learn about what they are good at. This builds their confidence and self-esteem for their future. Some have developed interests in a particular area and prepare to study their chosen subject and work towards their career choice. Children and young people access a wide range of activities that enrich their boarding life, such as ballet, tennis, horse riding and cadets. One young person commented that their interest in the armed forces has been developed and they are now looking forward to a career in the army, saying that staff have always encouraged,

helped and supported them in this interest.

There is a careful selection process for new boarders, and information from parents and previous schools is gathered to make sure that the child or young person is suitable and will fit in well to the boarding culture of the school. All new children and young people are supported very well, and the staff ratio allows them to be closely monitored and supported in their first days and weeks. There are no prefects, but the designated head boarder ensures that additional support and monitoring can take place. There is no other hierarchy within the boarders' group and it is very clear that some students feel very able to support less experienced boarders or boarders who are finding it challenging or difficult. This works very effectively and is well supervised by staff. There are times where younger boarders who are less confident can be placed in the same bedroom as older boarders who can support and mentor them. One young person stated: 'There are four girls in sixth form who I got to know when I first came, and they are like big sisters to me. They understand how I am feeling and they said you can come and talk to us if you are feeling down.'

Children and young people are able to maintain contact with their families, despite parents and carers being situated in other countries. This ensures that children and young people still feel as much a part of their own family as possible. Additionally, there is extremely good contact between boarding staff and parents. This ensures that parents always have their say and are informed about any incidents or difficulties that arise.

Health promotion has a high profile. Where children and young people have medical conditions, these are well managed, with the support of boarding staff who know how to respond. For example, where children and young people have skin conditions, asthma and other childhood illnesses and conditions, there is a clear audit trail of information ensuring that the most up-to-date information is available to staff. The arrangements for first aid and the use of medicines is organised by staff who are trained and knowledgeable. For one young person, their complex prescription medication was not named. There is the risk of the medicine being given to the wrong child if this is not put right. Health needs are well met. There is an ethos of exercise and healthy eating. The menu is extensive and the children and young people decide on their foods. Leaders and managers continue to ascertain their views, which are diverse and ever-changing.

Children and young people report that the head of boarding, and staff know, each of them very well. One child said: 'You can talk to staff, they have magic minds and know when there is something wrong.' Despite the lack of detailed documented care planning, boarding staff have very up-to-date information about children's and young people's needs. Therefore, this shortfall does not have a negative impact on the quality of care. Emotional well-being is seen as extremely important. Through excellent pastoral planning, staff all understand how to support children and young people with their problems and worries so that they can grow in self-esteem.

The accommodation generally meets the required standard, although the standard of boarding accommodation does not appear to be as good as that in the educational buildings. Leaders and managers have acknowledged this. There is a commitment to investment in this area and there is a programme of refurbishment planned for the near

future. Bathrooms are not all maintained to the required standard and one in particular, in the girls' boarding area, is unsightly. It looks tired and dirty, especially in the corners where dirt has collected on the floor and on the edges of the sink. This could pose a health risk to children and young people who use this bathroom.

## How well children and young people are protected

**Good**

All boarders told inspectors that they feel safe and raise no concerns about any matters of safety. The school is a safe place for young people, staff and visitors. There is a high regard for health and safety, the security of the building, and maintenance of fire safety systems. Children and young people are able to recite readily what they should do in the event of a fire, ensuring their safe evacuation should a fire occur.

Leaders, managers and governors make it their business to ensure that safeguarding matters are extremely well monitored.

The management of a single central register for staff ensures that each staff member has relevant checks regarding their suitability, reducing the risk of unsuitable people working at the school.

Issues such as sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and forced marriage have been considered and staff have received training in these areas. Some staff have recently been working with children and young people, in small groups and individually, to increase their awareness of the risks that they might encounter and how to make sure that they stay safe. This work complements discussions that boarders have in their own family life and therefore enhances their safety now and in the future.

There is a very low level of bullying, and boarders feel safe in the knowledge that staff always deal with this. Boarders learn the difference between right and wrong, because inappropriate actions are pointed out to them so that they learn from their mistakes. Staff know about important safeguarding information and incidents of difficult behaviour, bullying or other safeguarding concerns. Any safeguarding matters and allegations against staff have been well managed, and, in particular, the audit trail for allegations against staff is of a high quality.

There is a risk assessment policy but this does not always extend to all areas of risk. There were two areas where risks were identified that risk assessments had not covered. Therefore, those risks were not reduced effectively. These areas were first floor windows that open wide in children's and young people's bedrooms, and where the windowsills are also low, posing the risk of falls. Also, the area on the landing outside the girls' bedrooms upstairs, has a low, unprotected windowsill above the staircase where there is also a risk of falls. There have been no accidents to date in these areas. Generally, all other aspects of risk assessments around the building are well covered, as are activities in and out of the school. Where boarders go out on higher-risk activities, the head of care always ensures that he checks the provision robustly and obtains the relevant

safety details, including the appropriate registration details.

### **The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers**

**Good**

There is strong leadership at this school and it is clear that managers genuinely want children and young people to make good progress and to do well in their lives. The head of boarding is particularly aspirational in his approach. He regularly 'goes the extra mile' to help children and young people. For example, accompanying them to hospital in an emergency and taking time to help and support them outside of his normal working hours. His thoughtful and committed approach extends to every area of boarders' lives. He ensures that boarders are always listened to and are empowered to have their say, giving them confidence in speaking out for themselves in the future. Staff at every level say that they are supported and effectively managed, and it is clear that his enthusiasm inspires and motivates staff. Boarders know that he is there for them and hold him in very high regard. Their comments include: 'If we are upset in the house, he talks to us and we leave feeling happy' and: 'He tries to make us laugh all the time.'

There is a continuous momentum of improvement in the school, and the head of school and the governing body are instrumental in ensuring that the school continues to improve its boarding provision. The governing body is very effective. Its members make it their business to find out what is happening in the boarding provision and what life is like for the children and young people who live there. They regularly scrutinise the quality of care. For example, they have recently looked into the health records for one boarder in particular detail to ensure that they are making good progress with their health. This approach challenges the leadership of school to ensure that managers and staff are fully accountable for the decisions they make.

Policies show that leaders and managers are working with the most up-to-date legislation, and policies are regularly reviewed. They provide a good strong basis for all areas of work, and are available to staff and parents should they wish to refer to them. Clear leadership and good management ensure that these policies and procedures are followed.

Some children and young people at this setting have had complex and changing needs, so training is bespoke, and very much focused around specific needs. For example, the school has commissioned recent training in mental health to support practice.

All shortfalls from the last inspection have been addressed. There have been improvements to the organisation of bedrooms, where there is a more formal divide between the girls' and boys' accommodation, ensuring a higher level of privacy, and medication is always checked to make sure that it has been prescribed properly.



## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136491
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC060705
<b>DfE registration number</b>	

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Boarding school
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	68
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	11 to 18
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ellenor Beighton
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	6 February 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01673 843415
<b>Email address</b>	enquiries@de-aston.lincs.sch.uk

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