

Haydon Bridge High School - Ridley Hall Boarding Wing

Haydon Bridge High School, Haydon Bridge, HEXHAM, Northumberland, NE47 6LR

Inspection dates	11 to 13 October 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

- At the time of the inspection arrangements for fire safety were inadequate and placed students at significant risk of harm. Over a year had passed without a fire drill taking place. A fire drill took place on the second day of the inspection. It has taken too long for unsafe fire escape routes to be repaired but they are now adequate.
- Students' showering facilities do not provide sufficient privacy. This was identified as an issue at the previous inspection and has not been rectified. This shortfall has contributed to at least one incident of a safeguarding nature.
- Staffing levels are inadequate. Vacancies have remained unfilled for a substantial period. This leads to inadequate supervision and support for students, particularly those with complex needs. It also restricts the range of leisure activities on offer.
- Risk assessments on individual students identify strategies to mitigate potential risks, but these are not always implemented consistently.
- Responses to child protection concerns have not been sufficiently prompt. There is poor evaluation and recording of incidents. This means that appropriate support for individual students to keep them safe is not being provided.
- Leadership and management are inadequate. The manager of the boarding provision does not have the capacity to undertake her management role. She receives little support from the wider school management. Monitoring by governors is inconsistent, and identified improvements take too long to be implemented. Some documents and

policies are inaccurate and do not provide sufficient support and guidance for staff in carrying out their duties.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

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

- 1.1 A suitable statement of the school's boarding principles and practice is available to parents and staff, is made known to boarders, and is seen to work in practice.
- 5.3 Suitable toilet and washing facilities are provided for boarders, which are reasonably accessible from the sleeping accommodation. Separate toilet facilities are provided for boys and girls unless each toilet facility is provided in a separate room intended for use by one pupil at a time, the door to which is capable of being secured from inside. Toilet and washing facilities provide appropriate privacy for boarders.
- 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.
- 7.1 The school complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- 7.2 In addition, fire drills are regularly (at least once per term) carried out in 'boarding time'.
- 10.1 There is an appropriate range and choice of activities for boarders outside teaching time, including sufficient and suitably timed free time each day. Suitable risk assessments are in place for any activities which may put boarders at risk of harm.
- 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.
- 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.
- 13.2 There is clear leadership and management of the practice and development of boarding in the school, and effective links are made between academic and residential staff.
- 13.4 The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met.
- 15.3 The staff supervising boarders outside teaching time are sufficient in number, training and experience for the age, number and needs of boarders, and the locations and activities involved.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

There were no areas identified on this inspection.

Information about this inspection

The lead inspector gave three hours' notice of the inspection to the headteacher. Inspection activity comprised of: a tour of the boarding accommodation; discussions with boarders individually and in groups; face to face discussions with the headteacher, boarding and support staff; a telephone conversation with a governor; examination of policies, documents and records; evaluation of a hard copy survey completed by boarders and feedback from parents (via Parent View); and observation of routines within boarding at various times of the day and evening.

Inspection team

Nick Murphy	Lead social care inspector
Debbie White	Social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

Ridley Hall is the boarding house of Haydon Bridge High School, a maintained school. Ridley Hall is situated in a rural location, four miles from the main school site. It currently accommodates 26 students of both genders aged between 13 and 18 years, from Monday through to Thursday nights only. Boarding is available for students that live in certain post code areas and have to travel for more than one and a quarter hours to get to school.

An education inspection in December 2014 judged the school's overall effectiveness as inadequate and it was placed in special measures. Since then four monitoring inspections have taken place, the most recent in June 2016. This concluded that leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures. An interim executive board is currently in place, and is currently in negotiations to convert to an academy. The boarding provision was last inspected in June 2015.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Inadequate

The large majority of students say that they enjoy boarding. Many live in isolated rural communities, and they find that boarding enables them to maintain and develop friendships which would not be possible if they lived at home. A group of young people commented, 'We make friends with new people, get to know people you wouldn't normally make friends with. It's like a big sleep-over.' Relationships within the boarding house are generally very good. Students enjoy spending time with staff as well as socialising with each other. One student said, 'The staff and facilities and everything are great. The opportunities I have here really have made a difference to me in a positive way. I trust the staff and it's a great environment to grow up in.'

The behaviour of students is excellent. The atmosphere within boarding is relaxed yet orderly. Students are helpful and considerate, for example, allocating chores at mealtimes amongst themselves with little need for staff direction. Living in the boarding community helps students to develop maturity and a sense of responsibility. Staff encourage them to contribute to decisions about what activities they would like, and the weekly menus. A parent said, 'I think my children have grown up to be very sensible, sociable and polite through having had the chance to board.'

Students do their homework as part of the evening routine, most needing little motivation from staff to do so. Because the staff work as teachers or teaching assistants during the day, they are able to provide effective help for students. A parent commented, 'My children enjoy having prep time so their work gets done and have teachers on hand to help.' This quality of support undoubtedly contributes to the good academic outcomes for boarders. Summaries of students' progress demonstrate that almost all show a good or excellent work attitude and work ethic. Sub-levels of progress made by boarders at the end of year 9 are higher than their peers in the day school. And, the proportion of boarders gaining five good GCSEs is nearly 10 percentage points higher than day students. A parent said, 'I have no doubt that the boarding provision has had nothing but a profound positive affect on my son's education.'

Students enjoy good health. Many enjoy physical activity, either in the extensive grounds, the school's sports hall, or community facilities such as swimming. A small fitness room within the boarding wing is also popular.

The judgement in this area is inadequate because it is limited by the inadequate judgement for how well children and young people are helped and supported. Serious deficiencies in practice place boarders at risk. In addition, the oversight and support of boarding provided by the school's leaders and managers is poor. Problems are acknowledged, but are addressed in a piecemeal fashion. Boarding staff do their best but they have limited resources and expertise to support boarders effectively.

The quality of care and support

Inadequate

The boarding accommodation is extremely spacious. It affords ample space for informal socialising and group activities, as well as providing areas where students can be alone if they wish. The quality of furniture and fittings is generally good, and the domestic staff do an excellent job in maintaining a high standard of cleanliness. Bathing facilities are unsatisfactory and unsafe. Shower rooms contain several cubicles, each with only a curtain to provide privacy. At the last inspection, over a year ago, this issue was raised as a point for improvement. Although some work has taken place to survey the feasibility of replacing the curtains with doors, nothing has happened. Boarders' privacy and safety therefore remains compromised, with at least one safeguarding incident occurring because of the delay in addressing this issue.

The boarding provision is understaffed. Long-standing staff vacancies have not been filled due to the delays in the academisation process which has meant leaders have not sufficiently focused on the boarding facility. For the past year, on one of the four boarding nights there have been only three staff on duty instead of four. Over the past six months the situation has worsened, with two of the four nights being down to three person cover. The number of boarding students has reduced over the past year from 36 to 26. However, the extensive nature of the building and grounds means that this reduction does not diminish the need for full staffing in order to effectively support students and keep them safe. At the time of the inspection one of the vacancies was about to be filled and the other was being advertised.

The way in which information on students is held has been reviewed. Staff have access to individual files which contain relevant personal details. Some information needs to be more prominent so that staff can be aware of any issues which might harm a student. For example, important information in relation to safeguarding.

Staff promote healthy lifestyles. Arrangements for medication are extremely robust, with good recording and secure storage. Staff strive to support students who are members of sports clubs and encourage others to try different physical activities. However, insufficient staffing does not provide for a wider range of activities or more individual choices for students. A number of students commented that there was not enough to do in the evenings.

The cook has regular meetings with students and takes account of their needs and preferences in menu planning. Food is plentiful, varied and nutritious. Everything is cooked from scratch, and fresh fruit is always available. Students with specific dietary needs are well catered for. For example, the cook has introduced a vegetarian student who doesn't like vegetables to other healthy alternatives like Quorn and pulses.

How well children and young people are protected

Inadequate

The ability of staff to keep students safe in the event of a fire has been seriously compromised. There has been no fire drill for over a year. This was pointed out to the headteacher during the inspection who arranged for one to take place that evening. External fire escape stairs were found to be slippery and unfit for purpose in September 2015. They were not repaired until September 2016. This delay is totally unacceptable and contravenes legislation relating to fire safety.

The experience of students is that generally they feel safe in boarding. They report little bullying, and when it does happen staff respond appropriately. One negative comment, however, came from one student who strongly disagreed that they felt safe. They said that there were not enough staff on duty, and that students 'could be anywhere, and staff wouldn't know.'

Policies and guidance relating to staff conduct and how to respond to allegations are clear. Concerns about staff behaviour are reported promptly to the relevant agencies, fully investigated, and appropriate action taken. Responses to other safeguarding concerns are less satisfactory. The management of incidents involving students, where there may be a possibility of serious bullying, or sexual exploitation, is poor. Prior to September 2016, communication between boarding staff and the school's designated safeguarding lead (DSL) has not always been timely. Records of concerns do not demonstrate sufficient analysis or evaluation, particularly of whether it is necessary to refer the matter to children's social care. A new DSL was appointed from September 2016. This lack of robustness jeopardises students' safety.

Risk assessments which are in place for each student help staff to know what additional safeguards must to be put in place to meet their individual needs. Worryingly, strategies identified within these assessments are not always implemented. In one case, a student's risk assessment rated them as the highest level of risk for bullying, and that 'the student is to be supervised at all times when around peers.' Observation during the inspection confirmed this was not happening, due to the insufficient level of staffing. Furthermore, risk assessments are not regularly updated, either at fixed intervals or following incidents.

Staff manage to strike a reasonable balance between allowing students free access to the internet and monitoring their online behaviour. Arrangements for e-safety are robust, with reports being automatically generated if students access inappropriate websites. However, not all subsequent actions are documented accurately. One student's risk rating relating to e-safety remained at the lowest level even after they had been found to access inappropriate images. This kind of anomaly does not provide sufficient guidance for staff or help them to maintain a consistent response in order to keep students safe.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Inadequate

The leader of the boarding provision is the matron. The previous director of boarding has been absent since before the last inspection and has now left the service. The matron works each of the four boarding nights, directly supervising students. She has no allocated time for management duties. Following the last inspection, she has attended a residential conference for boarding school leaders, but has received no other management training. She has monthly meetings with the headteacher and regular contact with the school DSL, but does not receive formal, professional supervision within a line management structure. She tries her best and has the students' welfare at heart, but is woefully unsupported in her role.

The matron undertakes monthly monitoring of boarding which provides a helpful overview. Wider governance of the boarding provision is inadequate. Identified concerns have either not been addressed or acknowledged, nor have actions in response been sufficiently prompt. For example, a review of boarding by the interim executive board

(IEB) in April 2016 concluded that due to the reduction in student numbers, the continuing staff vacancies had ‘...not impacted on the service’s ability to maintain an adequate staffing to child ratio...’ Evidence gathered at this inspection clearly shows that this is an inaccurate conclusion to draw. The same review found that ‘...the present situation within Ridley Hall is unsustainable...these concerns are compounded by the absence of evidence that would indicate an appropriate level of support provided by the management within the school.’ In addition, a meeting of the IEB in June 2016 discussed the issue of the matron not receiving supervision or performance monitoring, but agreed to defer any decision until September when it was hoped that the school would become an academy. This did not take place and such delays in addressing identified issues are unacceptable.

Monitoring activity of boarding by the school’s leaders is sparse. The inspector was told that one of the governors undertakes visits to monitor safeguarding. Only one record of such a visit was produced, when the governor spoke to a group of students. There is no other evidence that critical records have had any oversight by the school’s management or governors. These include records of sanctions, restraints, complaints, incidents, and safeguarding concerns. Such a lack of oversight compromises safety and hinders improvement in practice.

Documentation is inconsistent in quality and accuracy. The statement of boarding principles and practice has clearly been cut and pasted from another document relevant to a children’s home. It includes terms such as ‘registered manager’, ‘children’s home’, and ‘social worker.’ It also says that staff are ‘...trained to work in a pro-social modelling manner...’ when patently they are not. This presents a misleading picture of the skills and knowledge of staff. Other policies have been similarly cannibalised from other sources with no care taken as to their relevance. The lone working policy and guidance appears to have been copied in its entirety from the county council procedure manual, as it deals with social workers doing home visits to clients. It is therefore worthless to boarding staff who find themselves frequently working alone with students and are therefore potentially vulnerable.

The school is in the process of converting to an academy and becoming part of a multi academy trust. The date for conversion has been postponed several times. The latest letter to parents from the IEB, dated October 2016, states that: ‘... there have been issues around the potential transfer of the lease for Ridley Hall... and its long term future.’ The prolonged delays in academy conversion and doubt over the future appear to have paralysed the ability of leaders to address the numerous shortcomings in management, staffing and the safety of students.

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 exceed 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	122328
Social care unique reference number	SC043077
DfE registration number	929/4130

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	26
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	13 to18
Headteacher	Mrs Helen McCormick (acting)
Date of previous boarding inspection	9 June 2015
Telephone number	01434 684422
Email address	admin@haydonbridge.northumberland.gov.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/ofsted." If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/ofsted

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

if you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.co.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2016

