

Appleford School

Appleford School, Elston Lane, Shrewton, SALISBURY SP3 4HL

Inspection dates

07/03/2017 to 09/03/2017

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

	Requires improvement	2
The quality of care and support	Good	3
How well children and young people are protected	Requires improvement	2
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good	3

Summary of key findings

The residential provision requires improvement because

- Not all national minimum standards are met, and additional areas for improvement were identified as a result of this inspection.
- The management of risk requires improvement because newly introduced risk assessments are not focused on the individualised needs of boarders. Improvement is required to ensure that staff are informed about how to identify, manage and respond to challenging and risk-taking behaviour by boarders.
- Current practices in relation to the administration and recording of medication requires improvement. Despite immediate action taken by senior leaders during the inspection, unsafe medication practices have the potential to place boarders at risk.
- Safer recruitment practices require improvement. The selection and vetting of new staff do not adequately safeguard boarders.
- The senior leadership team has made significant improvements to the school since the last inspection. These include strengthening the management and oversight of child protection concerns, reconfiguring the residential accommodation, employing new boarding staff, improving the selection and quantity of food, and improving the therapeutic behaviour management programme 'Thrive'.
- Senior leaders, managers and the proprietor have strengthened their oversight of the services provided in the school. They demonstrate tenacity and commitment to improving the experiences of boarders and the quality of care provided to them.
- Reporting and monitoring systems have developed since the last inspection. The senior leadership team's oversight has improved as a result.
- The management of child protection concerns has been strengthened. Three

designated safeguarding officers now ensure that the school's safeguarding protocols and procedures are implemented effectively. Safeguarding records are now well maintained.

- Boarding staff have been provided with training to enhance their knowledge and understanding of boarders' needs and behaviours.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

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

- 14.1 Schools operate safe recruitment and adopt recruitment procedures in line with the regulatory requirements and having regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State for Education.
- 3.8 All medication is safely and securely stored and proper records are kept of its administration. Prescribed medicines are given only to the children to whom they are prescribed. Children allowed to self-medicate are assessed as sufficiently responsible to do so.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that staff working in the school know and implement the school's policy in relation to boarders going missing and ensure the records reflect the actions taken to by staff.
- Ensure that risk assessments for boarders are individualised and clearly detail the actual risk, how to manage and respond to the risk, and what action should be taken to reduce risks.

Information about this inspection

The school was notified of the inspection on the morning of 7 March 2017. The inspection team arrived at 11.00am. The inspectors visited the boarding provision, observed staff and boarders' interactions, and met with boarders, boarding staff, the pastoral team, the health care team and senior leaders. In addition, the inspectors scrutinised a variety of records.

Inspection team

Sharron Escott

Lead social care inspector

Helen Cawston

Senior Her Majesty's Inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

Appleford School is an independent, co-educational residential special school for pupils aged from 7 to 19 years of age, who have dyslexia and/or associated learning difficulties. The school has a Christian character and close links with its local church. The school is inclusive of children of other faiths. Pupils may be referred from local authorities or private sources. The school offers the options of full boarding and day provision with options for flexi boarding.

The boarding provision currently comprises five boarding houses located both on and off the school site. They provide separate accommodation for boys and girls. At the time of this inspection, there were 79 residential pupils. The residential provision was last inspected on 21 March 2016.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Requires improvement

There are shortfalls in meeting two of the national minimum standards for residential special schools and in how effectively boarders are protected. As a result, the school does not yet meet the criteria for an overall judgement of good. The shortfalls identified have the potential to impact negatively on the welfare of boarders. In response, the senior leaders took immediate action as a result of the findings of this inspection.

Senior leaders and staff have worked hard to rectify the weaknesses identified at the last full inspection. Considerable financial investment and improved management oversight, including the appointment of an additional safeguarding officer, have resulted in a more effective management of child protection concerns.

The reconfiguration of boarding accommodation and the appointment of 10 new boarding staff have contributed significantly to improving pupils' boarding experience. Most boarders spoke positively about the support that they receive from the pastoral team and their house parents.

Staff continue to have high aspirations for pupils. Boarders are motivated and keep themselves fit. They are provided with a wide range of activities that support their health and well-being. Boarders told the inspectors that they are always busy and that their boarding experience is good. Some boarders benefit from undertaking voluntary work abroad and enjoy opportunities that they might not otherwise have. These opportunities include visiting a hotel in Spain to undertake work experience. In addition, 10 pupils have been selected to visit North India where they will give funds that they have raised, through charitable events, to the local community. These opportunities broaden the pupils' experiences, help them to develop confidence and contribute to improving their life chances.

Opportunities for boarders to maintain contact with their families are currently under review. This includes senior leaders ensuring that boarders across all boarding houses have easy access to the wi-fi so that they can use their own electronic devices. Boarders have access to the internet on the school's computers and families can call each house's landline phone to speak with staff or their child. There are clear policies in place for boarders to use their own mobile phones.

The views of the parents and carers are sought by the school. These views are positive. Those parents who contributed to this inspection were, in the main, positive about the boarding provision. However, a small number of parents raised concerns about one house parent's management of behaviour and an unsatisfactory level of communication and information sharing.

The quality of care and support

Good

There are five residential houses, three on site and two off site but in close proximity to the school. The standard of accommodation in three of the houses exceeds the standard

provided in the remaining two. There are plans to improve the accommodation provided in one of the houses situated on the main school site. Boarders are encouraged to personalise their own space and are provided with lockable facilities to secure their treasured items.

The senior leadership team has introduced an extensive range of activities available to the boarders, which incorporates a wide choice of sports. Personal preferences and talents are also promoted well. This approach enables boarders to pursue their current interests and to try new ones, which, in turn, helps to increase their social networks beyond those at school. In addition, the scout headquarters in London approached the school, asking for the local scout club to be relocated onto the school site and run by the school. This relocation successfully took place in September 2016 and is now attended well by 26 boarders and day pupils. The school are considering opening up the club to children who live locally and may wish to attend.

Boarders contributed well to the inspection. They told the inspectors that they are proud of their achievements and consider their boarding experiences to be good. They know how to raise any concerns they have and could identify individuals who they would go to speak to, including the two independent visitors who regularly visit the school, if they needed any help. Senior leaders have recognised the value of the independent visitor's role and have increased this provision by recruiting two more independent visitors.

Staff recognise when bullying takes place and respond well to incidents. Anti-bullying champions and information about how to recognise and respond to incidents of bullying are readily available to staff and boarders. Boarders say that they look out for each other. Comments from parents include: 'The school is making fast progress in managing bullying'; 'One of the school's strengths is its ability to promote life skills.' Boarders who were observed by inspectors were happy and confident within their environment and with their peers.

New monitoring systems have been introduced in the dining room. As a result, senior leaders and managers now have a detailed overview of the young people's diet. Staff monitor what food has been eaten, and are able to track young people's eating patterns and can identify trends and preferences, and potential eating problems. Most boarders spoken with reported that the quality and quantity of food available at mealtimes has improved, in particular the salad options. As a result, their dining experience has improved with an enriched and calmer atmosphere in the dining room.

How well children and young people are protected

Requires improvement

The arrangements in place to safeguard and ensure the welfare of boarders require improvement. One record relating to a missing-from-care incident and the management of medication and recruitment do not comprehensively and consistently detail actions taken or state clearly that the safety and well-being of boarders is paramount.

Safer recruitment practices require improvement. Recruitment files do not consistently and robustly show that the selection and vetting of new staff safeguards boarders. Records reviewed identified gaps in employment histories that were unaccounted for. Interview notes do not show how senior leaders have explored sufficiently an individual's

suitability for the role that they are applying for. References obtained are not always from previous employees, and, in some cases, only one character reference has been obtained. In addition, the senior leaders have failed to explore information received on one member of boarding staff's disclosure and barring check.

Boarding staff do not ensure that there is a robust audit trail of medicines that are brought into the residential accommodation and dispensed by boarding staff. In some cases, stock balances were unknown. At the time of the inspection, boarding staff were administering medication to one young person that had not been prescribed by a health care professional. Although immediate action was taken by the school during the inspection in response to this concern, including consulting with medical professionals, the weaknesses in the management of medication have the potential to place boarders at significant risk of harm.

The school uses a therapeutic model ('Thrive') to support the staff in managing some challenging behaviours and to provide a consistent approach to supporting boarders and day pupils. The model is based on working with young people who have troubling or challenging behaviours, providing simple practical strategies for staff to use to address these problems. The school has invested heavily in training in the last 12 months to ensure that all staff have a working knowledge of the therapeutic model. While it is evident that the staff talk more confidently about the model that underpins their practice, there is still more to do to ensure a more tailored approach to the needs of young people, including ensuring that risk assessments are more personalised and based on the needs of young people, and that assessment and the action plans that follow give clear strategies for dealing with challenging behaviours. It is apparent that staff receive the necessary information about boarders through staff briefing meetings. However, this information is not backed up by comprehensive individual written risk assessments.

One record, relating to two boarders being missing-from-care, does not show the actions taken by staff and that the school's policies and procedures have been followed or that effective action was taken in response. However, records of two more recent missing incidents demonstrate that procedures are effective and, due to the vigilance and appropriate action taken by staff, the boarders involved in these incidents were swiftly and safely returned to the school, following their brief absence. The identity and supervision of visitors to the school site is effectively managed.

The management of health and safety is well-organised and overseen by a health and safety officer based on site. Records show that appropriate action is taken to safeguard young people living on site. Regular fire alarm tests and evacuation drills take place and mean that young people know what to do in the event of an emergency.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good

At the last inspection in March 2016, the residential provision was judged by Ofsted as requires improvement. Since then, senior leaders and other staff have been working hard to improve the procedures that are in place to safeguard pupils in the boarding provision. The reporting and monitoring infrastructure has strengthened, and, in general, the school's culture of safeguarding and behaviour management has improved.

The senior leadership team is determined to improve the boarding provision further. Senior leaders are open to suggestions and try new ideas to support improvement. In addition, they actively seek advice, guidance and support from external agencies. Boarding staff are very motivated and enthusiastic about their roles and how they can help the pupils.

Management information systems have been reviewed. As a result, the proprietor is well informed of safeguarding concerns within the school. The designated safeguarding officer is supported well by two other staff who are both appropriately trained and have the required skills and experiences to carry out this important role. The visibility and accessibility of senior leaders during boarding time has improved.

There are adequate numbers of staff on duty to meet the collective needs of the boarders. Boarding staff speak highly of the support that they receive from senior leaders and managers. Staff receive regular formal supervision and their performance is appraised annually. Areas for development and improvement are clearly identified. Peer reviews have contributed significantly to this process.

Careful consideration has been given to the training needs of the boarding staff to ensure that the boarders' needs are better supported, monitored and managed. They receive good training opportunities, which include regular updates on safeguarding.

Senior leaders' oversight and management of complaints is effective. Records reviewed at this inspection were well-maintained and show the action taken and the outcomes. Improved consultation systems and surveys have enabled boarders to express their concerns more easily. As a result of boarders' feedback, senior leaders have enhanced adult supervision at times where boarders have said they feel most vulnerable.

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

Social care unique reference number SC039141

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 residential special schools.

Type of school Residential special school

Number of boarders on roll 79

Gender of boarders Mixed

Age range of boarders 7 to 18

Headteacher Mr David King

Date of previous boarding inspection 21/03/2016

Telephone number 01980 621 020

Email address secretary@appleford.wilts.sch.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 children looked after, 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 2017

