

Skegness Grammar School

Lincolnshire County Council

Skegness Grammar School, Vernon Road, Skegness, Lincolnshire PE25 2QS

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

Skegness Grammar School is a co-educational, selective, academy, which is a day and boarding school based in the town of Skegness. The school caters for boys and girls aged 11 to 18 years and there are currently 505 pupils on roll, of which 40 pupils are boarders. The boarding community caters for boarders from different cultures and ethnicities. The boarding house is located on the edge of the market town of Wainfleet. The boarding provision was last inspected in June 2015.

Inspection dates: 13 to 15 June 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

inadequate

The boarding school is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Date of last inspection: 2 June 2015

Key findings from this inspection

This boarding school requires improvement to be good because

- The boarding house has been too isolated from the school. This has meant that leaders were unaware of some of the long-standing issues affecting the boarding

house. Action plans for improvement have not been implemented. Serious incidents are not reviewed or reflected on to prevent reoccurrence.

- There has been a lack of direction, support and guidance for staff.
- There has been a lack of action when young people's possessions go missing.
- Staff do not organise many activities for young people or promote the activities that have been organised. Bureaucratic obstacles make it difficult to identify funding for some trips.
- Records are generally poor. This includes records of complaints.
- Staff do not receive good quality training for the role they carry out.
- Safeguarding information is not shared with relevant agencies in some circumstances.
- Medication is not safely managed, and chronic health conditions are not well understood by staff.
- Young people do not have good information about the consequences of breaking the rules. Staff have been disempowered from giving sanctions when the rules have been breached. This means that staff feel undermined and some inappropriate behaviour goes unchallenged.

The boarding school's strengths

- Young people are generally very well behaved, polite and helpful. They excel in their academic studies and most go on to study at university.
- A new temporary head of boarding has been appointed, who has already started to make improvements. The leadership team has been very responsive to the issues identified and have started to address them prior to the completion of the inspection.

What does the boarding school need to do to improve?

Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

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

- Ensure that there is good guidance for new boarders, especially around consequences of breaking the rules. (NMS 2.1)
- Ensure that the school has, and implements effectively, appropriate policies for the care of boarders who are unwell and ensures that the physical and mental health, and emotional well-being of boarders is promoted. These specifically refer to care of those with chronic conditions. (NMS 3.1)
- Ensure that all medication is safely and securely stored. (NMS 3.4)

- Ensure that the school ensures compliance with relevant health and safety laws by implementing effectively a written health and safety policy (NMS 6.1)
- Ensure that 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. (NMS 6.2)
- Ensure that reasonable protection is provided for boarders' personal possessions. (NMS 9.3)
- Ensure that the school consistently implements a written policy to promote good behaviour among pupils. (NMS 12.1)
- Ensure that the policy is understood by staff and pupils. (NMS 12.2)
- Ensure that 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 13.1)
- Ensure that there is clear leadership and management of the practice and development of boarding in the school, and that effective links are made between academic and residential staff. (NMS 13.2)
- Ensure that the school's leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role. (NMS 13.3)
- Ensure that the school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met. (NMS 13.4)
- Ensure that the school follows and maintains the policies and documents described in Appendix 1. (NMS 13.7)
- Ensure that the records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate. (NMS 13.8)
- Ensure that any staff member or volunteer employed or volunteering in a position working with boarders receives a regular review of their boarding practice, with opportunities for training and continual professional development in boarding. (NMS 15.1)
- Ensure that the school's written record of complaints identifies those complaints relating to boarding provision, and action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). (NMS 18.2)

Recommendations

- Consider continuing the buddying scheme, as young people found this useful. (Linked to NMS 2)
- Review the way activities are planned, funded and promoted to ensure that young people have access to a wide range of activities. (Linked to NMS 10)
- Consider renewing disclosure and barring checks at appropriate intervals. (Linked to NMS 14)

- Consider further improving the way in which staff consult with young people, take their views into account and provide them with feedback. (Linked to NMS 17)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

The departure of the previous head of boarding has had a negative impact. Young people say that the boarding house has declined since he left: 'It was more friendly, more like a family and now people are not as happy and we see arguments.'

Young people's possessions are not fully protected, because money has gone missing from their rooms on a number of occasions; managers are unable to demonstrate that appropriate and effective action has been taken to prevent a reoccurrence.

Staff do not organise many activities for young people or promote the activities that have been organised. Some trips are planned, but do not go ahead because they do not attract sufficient numbers to make them viable. In addition, when staff try to organise a trip out to somewhere that is popular but expensive, such as The Harry Potter Studios, funding policies prove too cumbersome to enable the trip to go ahead. A parent said: 'In the past, the level of leisure activities for the boarders was much better than now, so boarders get quite bored on weekends and end up playing with their electronic devices all the time and don't do much as a group.' Staff say that they used to go on long walks, hold community charitable events, organise various sporting tournaments or a 'bake off', and have impromptu water fights. Such activities take place infrequently at present. A young person said: 'We used to go to more places but now only go to Skegness.' The lack of activities means that young people get bored and tend to spend time with people from their own country/culture rather than integrating. This does not provide the young people with an enriching experience of boarding.

Young people report that they do not always feel listened to and are not consulted with about decisions. Some say that things are done to them rather than with them. For example, the routine at mealtimes has recently been changed. Although this system appears to ensure that mealtimes are more organised, young people did not appreciate the lack of consultation. Others were able to give good examples of where they have been involved in decision-making, such as swapping the lounge and the games room. This provides a bigger space for young people to sit and relax.

Medication is not stored safely. A medication fridge is not locked and is not checked to ensure that it is operating at the correct temperature. Staff do not have good information about the chronic conditions that some young people have. This means that they may be unaware of the signs and symptoms to look out for if the condition is deteriorating. Despite this, young people are well looked after when they are ill and they are registered with a local doctor when this is appropriate. Staff accompany

them to healthcare appointments when this is required.

Young people have varying views about the quality of the food provided. Some say that it has improved and others feel it is still not good. They say that menus are unhealthy. A parent said: 'I miss a much larger variety of fresh vegetables and much less unneeded carbohydrate combinations. At the end, boarders end up eating too much breaded/deep-fried food and little cooked/raw vegetables, fruit etc.' Fresh fruit and vegetables are available to young people and young people appeared to enjoy their food. A food council is in operation, and this helps catering staff to formulate the menus. Specialist diets are catered for and young people can request alternatives if they don't like what is on offer. A vegetarian option is always available.

Young people are helped to settle quickly into boarding life. They have the opportunity to stay for a night in boarding prior to starting in the school, having a meal and starting to make friends. There is a buddy system in operation to help new boarders settle. Young people found this very useful and would have liked it to continue throughout the year.

Young people excel academically. The school provide excellent careers advice and guidance for young people to enable them to make informed decisions about their future learning and careers. Students are aspirational and focused. Consequently, 94% of them went on to university in the last academic year.

Staff are committed to, and passionate about, their work. They do all that they can to provide young people with the best experience of boarding. However, this is hampered by a lack of leadership, guidance and support.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Safeguarding practice at the school has not been consistently good. Leaders took quick and effective action when concerns about drug use were brought to their attention. However, they failed to notify this incident to the local authority in which the young person and their family reside. Neither did the school, having removed the boarder, undertake to notify any future educational establishments that the young person might attend. This shortfall did not ensure that the young person will be supported in the future. Furthermore, leaders did not review the incident with boarding staff to learn any lessons that might prevent future incidents, such as why staff were not alert to changes in the young person's presentation and demeanour. Leaders did not fully appreciate their broader safeguarding responsibilities after the boarder was withdrawn from the school.

Young people are not provided with clarity about the consequences of poor behaviour. New young people, when undertaking their induction, are not provided with clear guidance and information concerning sanctions that may be imposed. Consequently, they remain unclear what action may be taken against them by the school.

Staff members in the boarding house are not empowered or supported in the management of young people's behaviour. Staff working in the boarding house have not routinely been able to sanction or discipline young people for negative behaviour without the agreement of the head of boarding. This has caused confusion about the roles of staff within the boarding house.

The behaviour of young people is generally very good. They are polite and helpful. However, rules designed to promote the integration of boarders from different countries are not enforced consistently. In communal areas, young people sit in groups based on their nationality and speak their own language. Despite posters asking them not to do this, the behaviour is largely unchallenged by staff. As well as hindering integration, this means that young people have fewer opportunities to practise their English.

Health and safety systems are not robust. Some portable appliances have not been checked within the time-frame set out in the school's own guidance. An LPG gas tank is accessible to young people, which is contrary to Health and Safety Executive guidance. A shower leaks, leaving a pool of water next to the shower tray and some non-slip shower mats are grimy on the underside. Leaders acted promptly to ensure that these hazards were addressed quickly.

The recruitment of staff is effective. Rigorous checks of potential new staff are undertaken. The robustness of these processes helps to keep young people safe. However, disclosure and barring service checks are not routinely updated. This means that some staff or volunteers have been working in the boarding house for many years without further checks.

The staff ensure that young people are safe while on trips or taking part in activities. Staff complete risk assessments that contain all relevant information required by staff to keep young people safe. This information includes medical information, staffing numbers and contact details.

With the exception of one incident previously referred to, young people who are vulnerable are identified and help is provided quickly. The safeguarding lead works effectively with teaching and non-teaching staff to identify young people who may be at risk. Staff understand their safeguarding roles and responsibilities and work within Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. They complete early help assessments and work effectively with other agencies to provide young people and their families with timely support where appropriate.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The boarding house has been through a period of change. The previous head of boarding left the school and his replacement has not been as effective. Staff complained that he did not give them enough support or guidance and spent very limited time with the young people. Staff and boarders report a significantly reduced

management presence within the boarding house. This is exacerbated by the current head of boarding's long-term absence. The boarding house is too isolated from the school, which means that management oversight has not been robust. Although there is detailed self-evaluation and subsequent action plans, these have not been acted on or reviewed. Consequently, staff have been left without proper training, support and guidance. Staff morale has been low, and young people have felt that staff are not listening to them or doing any activities with them. Furthermore, governors have not been well informed about issues within the boarding house. This means that they are unable to develop strategies to improve the provision. Additionally, boarding house policies, including child protection policies, have not been updated in line with the school's policies.

Support for staff has been poor. They have received very little formal support through team meetings or one-to-one line management meetings. This means that staff have not had a regular review of their boarding practice. Additionally, staff training has not been comprehensive. For example, staff have not received training in recognising signs of illegal substance misuse. Some staff have been given specialist roles, but have not been given any additional training for these roles. For example, the staff member in charge of medication and the person in charge of writing risk assessments lack specific training in these crucial areas.

There are few effective links between boarding staff and teaching staff. For example, teachers rarely go into the boarding house, and boarding staff are not invited to parents' evenings and do not complete a report for parents about how their son or daughter is getting on in boarding. This means that young people do not have the benefit of teaching staff during prep or free time. A young person said: 'Prep is good but they may or may not be able to help you as they're not really teachers.'

Reviews of serious incidents do not occur. This means that staff do not have the opportunity to reflect and learn from these incidents. Serious incidents of theft are not responded to effectively. Records are extremely poor and a lack of effective action has meant that money continues to go missing. Young people find this distressing and frustrating.

There are few recorded complaints. The response to, or outcome of, complaints, is poorly recorded. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain whether the complainant was satisfied with the response, or whether lessons were learned from the complaint.

A temporary head of boarding has been appointed to cover an interim period until a new permanent appointment can be made. The head of boarding, although very new, has already identified some areas for improvement and, together with the interim headteacher and deputy headteacher, has been extremely responsive to the issues identified.

Staff are enthusiastic about providing a good service for young people but feel hampered by the lack of direction, support and guidance.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Boarding school details

Social care unique reference number: SC060655

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Heather Scott

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Inspectors

Joanne Vyas: social care inspector

Phillip Morris: social care inspector



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