

The Shires

Shires Lane, Stretton, Rutland, LE15 7GT

Inspection dates

12 December 2017

Overall outcome

The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a) and 7(b)

- The school has not ensured that all safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose. Some staff do not have full confidence in all leaders to act on safeguarding concerns appropriately. The culture for safeguarding is ineffective.
- The roles and responsibilities of leaders are not clear at the school. This has led to confusion about who takes responsibility when responding to safeguarding concerns. The governing body has not challenged the school's leaders well enough to ensure that there are clear lines of accountability. Governors and leaders have recently started to review the roles and responsibilities of all leaders, but this work has not yet been completed or implemented.
- Where concerns have been raised about the conduct of members of staff, school leaders have not consistently liaised with other professionals from external agencies to check the suitability of staff to work at the school.
- Leaders do not check well enough the staff's confidence in the school's safeguarding procedures. Although a recent staff survey was undertaken, it did not contain pertinent questions to fully check the culture of safeguarding at the school. For example, staff were not asked about their knowledge of the whistleblowing policy. In addition, the staff were not asked if they have full confidence in all leaders to take appropriate action if they raise a concern about the conduct of another member of staff. Finally, leaders have not fully analysed the answers in the survey to inform whole school policies and training needs.
- The school does not have a comprehensive log of all safeguarding concerns about pupils which is easily accessible to appropriate staff. Consequently, school staff do not have a good knowledge of previous safeguarding concerns that have been recorded. In addition, a safeguarding concern which was discussed with inspectors, and was effectively dealt with by staff, had not been recorded. The procedures for recording safeguarding concerns, and making them easily accessible to appropriate staff when needed, are weak.
- Members of the governing body have not been resolute in following up concerns about the culture of safeguarding. Although a governor has been on site checking the

school's procedures for three days a week this term, the governors have not formally met since June 2017 to discuss how actions for safeguarding have been implemented. Governors have not fully held the school leaders to account and ensured that all staff have confidence in the school's systems for safeguarding.

- The staff provide a detailed account of all behavioural incidents that require physical intervention. After each incident parents, carers and social workers are informed. Senior leaders check the records to ensure that the right strategies have been used to de-escalate the incidents. However, leaders do not analyse the behavioural incidents over a period of time to check if there are any patterns to the pupils' behaviour, and try to reduce the number of incidents.
- The school has introduced a new policy and guidance for safer working practice which includes a code of conduct for staff. Although all staff have signed to say they have read the new policy, some were unsure if they had read the policy when they spoke to the inspector. Leaders have not checked the staff's understanding of the new policy well enough to ensure that it is fully understood by everyone who works at the school.
- The school publishes its safeguarding policy on the website. It includes reference to the latest government guidance. However, the school does not implement its safeguarding policy well enough to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fully effective.

Paragraphs 16, 16(a) and 16(b)

- The school has an appropriate risk assessment policy. However, this is not implemented effectively for all risks that have been identified. As a result, staff and pupils have been placed at a potential risk.
- The requirements of these independent school standards are not met.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Paragraphs 18 and 19

- The school's procedures for the initial recruitment for staff are satisfactory. The school ensures that all the appropriate checks have been completed before a person is offered a contract to work at the school. The school receives at least two references for each candidate. Furthermore, the school speaks directly to the referees to ask them to confirm that they have no reason to suspect that the candidate is not suitable to work with pupils.
- The school's single central record and recruitment files are well organised and contain the appropriate information.
- The requirements of these independent school standards are met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraphs 32(1), 32(1)(b), 32(3) 32(3)(f)

- While the complaints policy is available on the school's website, the school does not publish the number of complaints it has received in the preceding year.
- The requirements of these independent school standards are not met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraphs 33, 33(j), 33(j)(ii)

- The school has not kept comprehensive records of how a complaint has been dealt with. If the school has liaised with an outside agency to deal with a complaint, it has not kept a record to say if the outside agency is satisfied with the actions taken by the school.
- The complaints policy does not set out how school leaders publish the details of the actions that they take as a result of any complaint that they receive.
- The requirements of this independent school standard are not met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)

- Leaders have not ensured that all the independent school standards have been met consistently. The arrangements for safeguarding are ineffective.
- Leaders have not promoted the well-being of all pupils effectively. The roles and responsibilities of senior leaders are unclear and the governing body has not fully held leaders to account for their actions.
- The requirements of this part of the independent school standards are not met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards'). Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school does not meet the following school standards

- Ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school, and that such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraphs 7, 7(a) and 7(b)).
- Ensure 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 (paragraphs 16, 16(a) and 16(b)).
- Ensure that details of the complaints procedure and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year are made available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate (paragraphs 32(1), 32(1)(b), 32(3), 32(3)(f)).
- Ensure that the school maintains a record of the action taken as a result of complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld) (paragraphs 33, 33(j), 33(j)(ii)).
- The proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently, and that they fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently, and that they actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)).

School details

Unique reference number	131018
Social care unique reference number	SC065071
DfE registration number	857/6004
Inspection number	10044890

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Day special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	17
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	6
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	National Fostering Association (NFA)
Chair	Mr Graham McEwan
Headteacher	Mrs Marina Gough
Annual fees (day pupils)	£75,000
Telephone number	01780 411 944
Website	www.theshires.org.uk
Email address	Info@theshires.org.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	23–25 February 2016

Information about this school

- The Shires provides full-time education for up to 20 pupils and learners in the age range 11 to 19 years who have autistic spectrum conditions and severe learning difficulties, together with associated challenging behaviour.

- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. The majority are in public care.
- The previous inspection of the school took place in February 2016.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was an emergency inspection commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) in response to concerns raised about the deployment of staff. The inspection was conducted without notice.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning in all four classrooms.
- Meetings were held with the deputy director for care and education, the teaching team manager and a governor. In addition, the inspector met all teachers and teaching assistants who were at work on the day of the inspection.
- The inspector held telephone conversations with the chair of governors and the director for quality and compliance for the NFA. In addition, the inspector spoke with the local authority designated officer (LADO) by the telephone.
- The inspector scrutinised school policies, procedures and records related to safeguarding to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Martin Finch, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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