

The Shires

Shires Lane, Stretton, Rutland LE15 7GT

Inspection dates

11 September 2018

Overall outcome

The school meets 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), 7(b), 32(1), 32(1)(c)

- At the emergency inspection, the lead inspector found that the school's safeguarding procedures were not fit for purpose. The roles and responsibilities of leaders were not clear, and some staff did not have full confidence that leaders would act on safeguarding concerns appropriately. Leaders did not check that staff understood their safeguarding responsibilities and did not maintain comprehensive safeguarding records. Furthermore, leaders did not identify patterns in pupils' behaviour to reduce incidents of challenging behaviour that required physical intervention.
- The inspector also found that members of the governing body had failed to hold leaders to account to ensure that safeguarding procedures were effective. Governors did not meet regularly enough to discuss leaders' actions to safeguard pupils and to provide leaders with sufficient challenge.
- Following this inspection, the inspector found that staff have a firm understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. They know that keeping pupils safe and caring for pupils' welfare is everyone's responsibility. They know what they must do if they have a concern about a pupil's well-being.
- Staff know who the safeguarding leaders are. They are confident that these leaders will take quick and effective action to resolve any safeguarding concerns.
- Since the previous inspection, staff have received wide-ranging safeguarding training, including on child sexual exploitation, peer-on-peer abuse, and radicalisation and extremism.
- Staff know the different types of abuse and the signs to look for. In working with pupils, they are vigilant to identify signs that may suggest that there is a safeguarding concern.
- Safeguarding leaders regularly check staff's understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities and of the school's procedures to report any safeguarding concerns.
- Staff receive regular opportunities to discuss pupils' welfare and raise any safeguarding concerns. These include daily morning meetings at which staff receive information about pupils' well-being during the preceding night, and weekly staff meetings.

- Safeguarding leaders keep a comprehensive record of all safeguarding concerns. These records identify the nature of the concern, the actions that leaders have taken, and any external agencies with which they have liaised.
- The safeguarding records demonstrate that leaders take prompt and effective action to resolve safeguarding concerns. Leaders keep parents or carers, including pupils' social workers, informed and work well with external agencies when the need arises. Leaders demonstrate tenacity to ensure that pupils receive the support that they need.
- Regular meetings involving all safeguarding leaders ensure that all are up to date about any concerns regarding pupils' welfare and the actions that leaders have taken.
- These meetings also enable safeguarding leaders to review pupils' behaviour. They adapt a pupil's care plan and risk assessment to provide further support when they identify any emerging patterns in a pupil's behaviour. This is particularly the case when pupils demonstrate challenging behaviours that require physical intervention.
- Governors receive information about safeguarding concerns and the actions that leaders have taken to resolve them. Governors use this information to provide leaders with appropriate levels of support and challenge, including at governor meetings.
- The proprietor has ensured that a leader with the National Fostering Agency (NFA) has worked with the safeguarding leaders to make sure that the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe are effective. The leader regularly visits the school to review these procedures.
- The school's safeguarding policy, which is available on the school's website, reflects the latest government guidance.

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

- At the emergency inspection, the lead inspector found that leaders had failed to implement the school's risk assessment policy effectively. Leaders had failed to draw up appropriate risk assessments for staff returning to work after a period of suspension. Leaders had failed to identify potential risks and put into place necessary strategies to manage these risks.
- Senior leaders now have in place a detailed risk assessment to use if a member of staff returns to work after a period of suspension. This risk assessment enables leaders to identify possible risks and to put into place strategies to reduce these risks.
- There are comprehensive risk assessments in place for educational visits that staff use alongside pupils' individual risk assessments. These risk assessments ensure that pupils are safe when they are on an educational visit away from the school site.
- Senior leaders regularly review pupils' individual risk assessments. They adapt these as new risks emerge related to pupils' behaviour or their additional needs. Through this, leaders ensure that staff take appropriate action to keep pupils and staff safe.
- The requirements of these school standards are met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraphs 32(1), 32(1)(b), 32(3), 32(3)(f), 33, 33(j), 33(j)(ii)

- At the emergency inspection, the lead inspector found that leaders had failed to record the number of complaints that the school had received, including during the previous

academic year. The lead inspector also found that the school's complaints policy did not set out how the leaders would publish the details of the actions that they had taken to resolve any complaint that they had received.

- The school's complaints policy provides information on how leaders will record the actions that they have taken to resolve a complaint.
- The complaints policy records the number of complaints that the school has received, including during the previous academic year.
- The complaints policy is on the school's website. It is available to parents of current and prospective pupils.
- The requirements of these school standards are met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- At the emergency inspection, the proprietor had not ensured that the senior leaders had a secure understanding of the independent school standards. The proprietor had not ensured that leaders had taken effective action to ensure that the school met all the standards. This included standards related to pupils' well-being.
- Since the emergency inspection, senior leaders have taken appropriate action to ensure that their safeguarding procedures are effective. They have also ensured that appropriate risk assessments are in place and that the complaints policy provides the necessary information.
- Senior leaders demonstrate a secure understanding of the requirements of the independent school standards that were previously unmet. The action that they have taken to resolve the concerns that the inspector identified at the emergency inspection has ensured that senior leaders now actively promote the well-being of pupils.
- Members of the governing body hold leaders to account for their actions, including in relation to safeguarding.
- At the request of the proprietor, leaders from the NFA have undertaken a thorough review of the school's provision, including safeguarding procedures, to ensure that the school meets the independent school standards.
- The requirements of these school standards are met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school now meets the following independent 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 academic 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
DfE registration number	857/6004
Inspection number	10070479

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 special 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	14
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	8
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Acorn Care and Education
Chair	Craig Ribbons
Principal	Sandra Talbott
Annual fees (day pupils)	£76,500
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 students 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 an education, health and care plan. The majority are in public care.

- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The principal took up her post in May 2018. She is also responsible for the leadership of another school, two children's homes and a post-19 residential care home that the proprietor owns.
- The head of school, who is responsible for the day-to-day running of The Shires, took up his post in September 2017.
- The previous standard inspection of the school took place in February 2016.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection. The standards checked related to the school's safeguarding and risk assessment procedures, the complaints policy and the quality of the school's leadership and management.
- This was the school's first progress monitoring inspection. The inspection took place without notice.
- An emergency inspection of the school took place on 12 December 2017, at which the school was judged to not be meeting independent school standards relating to safeguarding, risk assessment, complaints, and leadership and management.
- The Department for Education (DfE) required the school to prepare an action plan in response to the emergency inspection. Ofsted evaluated this action plan on 18 May 2018. The DfE rejected the school's action plan.
- During the progress monitoring inspection, the lead inspector held meetings with the principal, the head of school, the chair of governors and a representative of NFA, which owns Acorn Care and Education.
- The lead inspector met with all of the school's teaching staff, including teaching assistants. The inspector also met with six members of the care staff.
- The lead inspector spoke by telephone with the local authority designated officer.
- The lead inspector scrutinised school policies, procedures and records related to safeguarding, risk assessment and complaints to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- The lead inspector checked the school's single central register and the school's system for recruiting staff.

Inspection team

Simon Hollingsworth, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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