

Ashby School (School House)

Ashby School

School House, Leicester Road, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Leicestershire LE65 1DH

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

Ashby School is an academy boarding school. School House, situated within the grounds of Ashby School, provides boarding accommodation for boys attending Ashby School, Ivanhoe College and Ashby Church of England School. School House currently accommodates 64 boys, aged 10 to 18 years.

Inspection dates: 6 to 8 November 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	inadequate
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	inadequate
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
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There are serious and widespread failures, which mean that children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and the care and experiences of children and young people are poor.

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Date of last inspection: 5 February 2015

Key findings from this inspection

This boarding school is inadequate because:

- Children are not suitably protected in this boarding house. There is widespread bullying among the younger children.
- Staff do not recognise serious harmful behaviours and, therefore, fail to address

such behaviour decisively.

- Healthcare arrangements are poor. Physical and emotional health needs are not addressed. The director of boarding has prevented children getting the help and support they require.
- Children are not properly protected from the risk of fire.
- The sleeping accommodation does not meet the needs of some of the children.
- Children complain about the food. It is often of poor quality and does not provide a balanced and healthy diet.
- Written risk assessments for activities are poor and do not adequately promote children's safety.
- Behaviour management is institutionalised and harsh. There are punitive and inconsistent behaviour management strategies in place.
- Some staff do not demonstrate the level of care and compassion that is required when working with children who are away from their families.
- There are not enough staff on duty to adequately supervise children.
- Children do not have a satisfactory way to contact staff at night.
- Some children do not feel valued or listened to by some staff.

The boarding school's strengths:

- The environment in communal areas and the sixth-form areas are homely and comfortable.

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:

- 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 wellbeing of boarders is promoted. These include first aid, care of those with chronic conditions and disabilities, dealing with medical emergencies and the use of household remedies. (NMS 3.1)
- Suitable sleeping accommodation is provided for boarders. It is well organised and managed with risk assessments undertaken and findings acted upon to reduce risk for all boarders. Where boarders are aged 8 years or over, sleeping accommodation for boys is separate from sleeping accommodation for girls. (NMS 5.1)
- The school complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. (NMS

7.1)

- All boarders, including those with special dietary, medical or religious needs, are provided with meals which are adequate in nutrition, quantity, quality, choice and variety. (NMS 8.1)
- 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. (NMS 10.1)
- 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. (NMS 11.1)
- The school has and consistently implements a written policy to promote good behaviour amongst pupils. This policy includes: measures to combat bullying, including cyberbullying, and to promote positive behaviour; school rules; disciplinary sanctions; when restraint, including reasonable force, is to be used and how this will be recorded and managed; and arrangements for searching pupils and their possessions. (NMS 12.1)
- The school's leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role. (NMS 13.3)
- 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. (NMS 15.3)
- Boarders have a satisfactory means of contacting a member of staff in each house at night. (NMS 15.8)
- Boarders are actively encouraged to contribute views to the operation of boarding provision, are able to raise concerns and make complaints, and their views are given appropriate weight in decisions about the running of the school. Boarders are not penalised for raising a concern or making a complaint in good faith. (NMS 17.1)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

The promotion of physical and emotional health is poor. For example, children are regularly sent to school when they are ill. This demonstrates a lack of care and increases risks to children's emotional and physical health.

Children who stay overnight in the sick room are not adequately supervised. For example, a child suffered a head injury and had a headache. He was not monitored throughout the night. Children have no way of contacting staff if they need help without leaving the sick room. This leaves children at risk of their physical health

deteriorating.

There is an unacceptable delay in taking children to hospital when they have a serious injury. For example, a child fractured his arm but did not get medical attention until the following day. Parents are not informed of illnesses that their child suffers. For example, parents have not been informed about their son who regularly vomits.

The emotional health of children is not adequately promoted. Most staff do not recognise when a child needs help. For example, a child has said that he is feeling depressed and his mental health is clearly very fragile. This child says that he feels like a 'social outcast in the home'. He also said that he 'has never felt as depressed as what he now feels'. Managers have prevented this child from accessing the necessary mental health services, ignoring the advice of the medical supervisor. Consequently, the child's mental health is in decline.

Medication is not safely managed. Subdispensing (when one person redispenses medication into another vessel and does not give it to the child themselves) is a common practice, particularly when children go on leave from the boarding house. This increases the risk of children taking the wrong medicine. Medication has not been given to children when they go on leave, meaning they miss vital medication. Controlled medication is only given out by one member of staff instead of two. This is not safe practice.

Children complain about the food. Meals do not provide a balanced diet and are not culturally appropriate. When catering staff have tried to provide more culturally appropriate food, children say that it is not nice, so they do not ask again. Children who have significant health concerns such as diabetes are not appropriately catered for, despite the medical supervisor providing guidance about what the child should be eating.

Some children do not feel valued or listened to by some staff. Consultation and information sharing with children are poor. Simple requests made by children are not actioned. A child said: 'It's nothing like it says on the internet. You are just a little person in this house, with no wi-fi, no one to talk to and you can't even speak to your parents in peace.'

The younger pupils all sleep in dormitories with up to six other children. They all sleep in bunk beds. A tall 15-year-old complained that the bed is too small for him and he is uncomfortable. Children also complain that the dormitories are too noisy and there is not enough storage space. One child explained that he likes the relaxation room. He says that this is the only place he can read in peace.

Although sixth formers report a positive experience once they have moved into the sixth-form accommodation, younger children have been failed and seriously let down.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: inadequate

Children are not safe or protected in this boarding house.

The children have reported concerns to inspectors about sexually harmful behaviours between children. Children say that when they tell staff, staff have failed to act promptly or effectively. This failure to recognise and quickly respond to identified risks has left children at risk of significant harm.

Children report feeling scared of other children. There are several serious incidents of bullying taking place in the home. These range from physical assaults between the younger children to significant name-calling.

Staff have failed to take appropriate action when safeguarding concerns have emerged. They have failed to make a referral to appropriate safeguarding agencies. As a result, the proper investigations have not been carried out. Furthermore, staff have not used whistle-blowing procedures to report their concerns about the practice of other staff. Children have been left at risk of significant harm.

Young adults, upon turning 18, are given alcohol as a present from the staff. This is not only inappropriate in a school setting, but leaves young adults vulnerable to becoming intoxicated. Alcohol may potentially be given to other children who could be under the legal age.

Some children are unable to identify a member of staff who they would go to if they had a problem. Some staff have failed to build positive and strong relationships with children. This has left children extremely vulnerable.

Risk assessments are inadequate in ensuring children's safety. They are descriptive and generic. There is no evidence to show that staff have read and understood them.

Supervision of children is inadequate in the house. Three staff supervise all the children and sleep overnight in the boarding house. Young children have been left unsupervised for long periods of time. For example, an inspector observed children play-fighting at the top of a set of stairs. No staff were visible to manage this risky situation. These children were left unsupervised for more than 25 minutes.

Punitive and inconsistent behaviour management strategies are used. For example, children who are late for meals are given 'jankers'. This means that children must present themselves to the house master's flat with polished shoes for 7am, then complete jobs before and after school.

Children are not properly protected from the risk of fire. School bags line a narrow corridor in the morning because children are not allowed to go back to their rooms after breakfast. This causes a trip hazard and blocks the fire door. Furthermore, recommendations from a fire officer have not been actioned. Dormitory doors can be

locked from the outside. If children were in the rooms when these doors are locked, they would not be able to get out.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Limited oversight of the boarding house means that entrenched poor practice has been allowed to continue.

Incidents are not reviewed. This means that leaders and staff do not reflect on practice or learn lessons to improve the management of incidents. Staff are not given regular opportunities to formally review their practice. This limits their development. Staff training does not give staff the knowledge that they need to meet the needs of the children in their care. For example, staff have not received training in diabetes, diet and nutrition, radicalisation prevention, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism or child development.

Some staff do not demonstrate the level of care and compassion that is required when working with children, particularly children who are away from their families and require not only physical but also emotional support. This has not been addressed by leaders.

There is a huge difference between the quality of the sixth-form area and the quality of the younger children's areas. Sixth formers share with one other person and have en-suite facilities. Younger children live in the old part of the house and sleep in dormitories of up to seven children. Children complain about noise and mess. They also complain about the lack of storage space.

Members of the governing body regularly visit the boarding house and talk to children and staff. They have recently recognised that their committee meetings for the boarding house need to be led by governors rather than the director of boarding. This will enable them to have a greater oversight of the boarding provision and the care of the children.

The headteacher is new to the role, accepted the findings of this inspection and is taking significant action to start to address the serious failures identified in this inspection.

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 differences 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 whom 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: SC001838

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Geoff Staniforth

Type of school: Boarding School

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Inspectors

Joanne Vyas: social care inspector

Davinia Lawton: social care inspector



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