

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, aged 10 to 18 years. School House currently accommodates 52 boys.

Inspection dates: 22 to 24 May 2019

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

requires improvement to be good

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: inadequate

Date of last inspection: 6 November 2018

Inspection judgements

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

Several improvements are evident within the boarding house. These improvements include the quality of the food and the activities offered to boarders. Staffing levels have increased and staff are more present within areas where boarders are. Boarders appear to be generally happier. A second acting director of boarding has commenced full time and this has also benefited the boarders.

However, progress towards fully meeting the national minimum standards is slow, particularly when implementing effective safeguarding processes. Furthermore, the acting directors of boarding have been working as part of the staff team. This has left them little time to provide good oversight of the boarding provision.

Boarders are consulted through surveys and a suggestion box. Five-minute meetings are currently used to hand out notices to boarders. The director of boarding is hoping to develop this so that boarders are fully engaged in the meeting. Despite this, some boarders are feeling frustrated that their views are not asked for or acted on. It is difficult to ascertain from the surveys and suggestions what has changed as a result of what boarders have said. The acting director of boarding was able to demonstrate that boarders' suggestions have changed some boarding practice.

Some staff and boarders said they think the house has lost its 'homely feel'. Although boarders like the split mealtimes, this means that boarders rarely sit down together, and they miss this. Boarders would like to have everyone together for meals at weekends. The acting director of boarding is considering this suggestion.

Some boarders said they have staff they can talk to and they said staff listen to them. However, others said they would not talk to staff if they were unhappy. Staff are now in communal areas spending time with boarders and, therefore, boarders have far more opportunities to speak to staff than previously.

Medication is not yet managed well. There have been incidents of medication not being given; of incorrect recording; poor hygiene when checking medication; staff not following policy and staff not giving the prescribed medication. For example, staff have given paracetamol when more effective medication has been prescribed. Recording of checks on boarders who are ill in the sick room stops when the medical supervisor leaves for the day. The acting director of boarding assured inspectors that boarders are checked on regularly when the medical supervisor leaves.

Activities available for boarders have increased significantly. For example, boarders have access to a gaming room where they can play games on gaming machines; a room for board games; a music room; a cinema room; as well as a pool table and a comfortable lounge. They can also play football and have a football coach visit twice

a week. They can also access the school's swimming pool and sports hall. Some boarders still complain that they are bored, but they do appear to have plenty to keep them occupied.

Boarders are much happier with the food provided. There is more choice and food appears to be healthier. Specialist diets are catered for. Boarders who are adhering to religious rituals are catered for. Boarders like the newly introduced split mealtimes because this means mealtimes are quieter and they do not have to queue for a long time to get their meal.

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

Safeguarding systems that assist in ensuring the safety and well-being of boarders are not yet embedded in the boarding house. There is no clear link between school and boarding. Although the school has systems regarding any safeguarding matters, there are no such systems within boarding. The designated safeguarding lead does not have a good understanding of the safeguarding concerns within the boarding house.

Leaders have been slow to consider and embed good, clear and robust safeguarding practices. This means that when incidents occur, they are not always given the due consideration that is required to ensure that boarders' needs are fully met. Safeguarding referrals have been made in respect of some boarders. However, although staff can identify what they would do if they had a concern about a child, some records do not evidence that this knowledge is always put into practice.

Incidents regarding boarders drinking alcohol, smoking and using illegal substances are also extremely concerning. Within the local area, there is a high incidence of illegal substance use. However, there is no evidence to suggest that any work has been carried out with the boarders to address this issue. Staff have not received additional training to help them identify illegal substances and there is not a good level of supervision to ensure that staff have enough oversight of what the boarders are doing.

Supervision of boarders requires improvement. Staff do not always know where boarders are or what they are doing. For example, a small fire started by accident when boarders were unsupervised, and a towel was thrown, landing on a light bulb.

Significant gaps in recording of incidents mean that it is difficult to gain any real sense of what has occurred, what action has been taken by staff and how boarders have been supported. What is known is that there are significant shortfalls in the way that some incidents have been dealt with and this has left some boarders vulnerable.

Staff find it difficult to manage the behaviour of some boarders. For example, staff struggle to help boarders to calm when they are upset or angry. Some behaviour management strategies remain inconsistent, and there is a lack of clarity across the

staff team.

A fire risk assessment was completed in December 2018, but the deficiencies highlighted have not been addressed satisfactorily. For example, some fire doors do not close properly. These issues were discussed with the headteacher and the acting director of boarding during the inspection and action was taken to address the shortfalls identified.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

There are currently two acting directors of boarding. This has worked well in some areas, such as implementing some changes. However, one acting director is due to return to his substantive post in the school. Furthermore, both have been working as a house parent and, therefore, have struggled to oversee practice. For example, poor practice evidenced within records has not been challenged.

Governors visit the boarding house frequently and speak to staff and boarders. They ask for evidence of practice. This helps them to understand the effectiveness of the changes implemented. However, they have a very positive view of boarding and do not have a good understanding of the remaining challenges.

Communication between staff and managers could be improved to ensure that important messages are known by all staff. For example, boarders who go swimming on a Friday have been missing supper due to the lateness of their return. However, managers said that they have told staff that boarders can have their supper when they return. This was not widely known, and boarders complained about not being allowed supper at this time.

A new recording system has been introduced recently. Managers hope that this will improve recording. Currently, records are not clear because they do not link up with other records. For example, if boarders are not present for prep, it does not state on the daily records where the boarder is and, therefore, there is no evidence to demonstrate that staff know where a boarder is during this time.

Staff are not receiving good support to ensure that they can move positively through the changes that have been made since the last inspection. Review of boarding practice for house parents has not yet occurred.

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 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)
- All medication is safely and securely stored and proper records are kept of its administration. Prescribed medicines are given only to the boarders to whom they are prescribed. Boarders allowed to self-medicate are assessed as sufficiently responsible to do so. (NMS 3.4)
- The school complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. (NMS 7.1)
- Any staff member or volunteer employed or volunteering in a position working with boarders has a job description reflecting their duties, receives induction training in boarding when newly appointed, and receives regular reviews of their boarding practice, with opportunities for training and continual professional development in boarding. (NMS 15.1)
- Staff know the whereabouts of boarders (or know how to find their whereabouts) in their charge at all times. (NMS 15.5)

Recommendations

- Ensure that boarders receive feedback about their suggestions to demonstrate that staff are listening to them and that their suggestions are valued. (Linked to NMS 17.1)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people 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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Inspector:

Joanne Vyas, social care inspector (lead)
Davinia Lawton, social care inspector



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