

Ashwicke Hall School

Ashwicke Hall, Marshfield, Chippenham, Wiltshire SN14 8AG

Inspection dates

8 January 2019

Overall outcome

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

Boarding provision outcome

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

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7–7(b)

- At the time of the previous progress monitoring inspection, the school did not meet the standard in this paragraph because of shortcomings in the procedures for the recruitment of staff. Senior leaders have continued to develop the quality of safeguarding practice at the school. They have built on the improvements seen at the previous monitoring inspection. The principal, working closely with the advisory governance board, has made good use of guidance from outside agencies and good practice seen in other schools.
- The principal has taken on the role of designated safeguarding lead since September 2018, and so provides suitably senior and high-profile leadership of this area of the school's work. This is bringing about a change in the culture at the school as staff become better able to identify risks and more willing to report concerns.
- Senior leaders have introduced a new system for recording and communicating concerns about pupils' welfare when they are raised. Consequently, they have good access to information and use this effectively. For example, when pupils move to or from other schools in the international SABIS group, information is readily available and easily transferred.
- Senior leaders have reviewed the school's safeguarding policy and made sure that it is based on the latest statutory requirements. For example, it incorporates recent revisions to the guidance contained in the document 'Keeping children safe in education'. This policy is comprehensive and, together with the training provided by the school, ensures that all members of staff are clear about their responsibilities. This policy is posted on the school's website and is made available to parents and families.
- Although safeguarding practice is improving, these improvements are not yet sufficiently embedded in the day-to-day work of the school. For example, since the previous

monitoring inspection, senior leaders have failed to manage some safeguarding concerns effectively. Weaknesses are still evident in the overall management of incidents and in decision-making. Leaders and managers have not ensured that all concerns are shared with safeguarding agencies within appropriate time scales.

- As a result, the standard in this paragraph is not met.

Paragraph 8–8(b)

- Senior leaders' work to ensure that all members of staff have a thorough understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities applies equally to those who work in the boarding provision. For example, recent training for all staff has led to an enhanced understanding of their duty to be watchful for signs of extremism or radicalisation.
- Pupils feel well respected and looked after in the boarding provision. Even though many have recently arrived at the school, pupils told inspectors that they already feel welcome and well cared for. Pupils have access to an external contact person from the local community whose role is to listen to them if they wish to talk about any concerns or worries.
- The principal's work to develop the culture of safeguarding at the school is having a positive impact in the boarding provision. Even so, because the response to safeguarding concerns is not yet robust enough, the standard in this paragraph remains unmet.

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

Paragraph 18(2), 18(2)(f)

- At the previous monitoring inspection, this standard was not met because of a lack of rigour in the process for staff recruitment, selection and vetting. Senior leaders have reviewed these processes thoroughly and made substantial improvements.
- The advisory governance board has provided strong challenge and support for senior leaders in this area. The school's recruitment processes are better now. Staff now ensure that a suitable number of references are requested for each candidate, and they follow up tenaciously on these requests when replies are delayed. Staff keep good records of interviews and incorporate suitable questions to explore safeguarding issues with candidates.
- Senior leaders make sure that suitable checks are made on staff before they begin their work at the school or in the boarding provision.
- As a result of these improvements, these standards are now fully met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1)–34(1)(c)

- This standard relates to the proprietor's responsibility to ensure that leaders and managers actively promote the well-being of pupils. At the time of the previous monitoring inspection in May 2018, this standard was unmet.
- The advisory governance board at the school was established by the proprietor following the inspection in May 2017, which judged the school to be inadequate. The chair of the board is suitably skilled and experienced. He provides expert leadership to the board and so the board is able to provide effective challenge and support to senior leaders.

- Since May 2017 the board has overseen a root and branch overhaul of the leadership of the school. As a result, there has been steady improvement at the school. This has been reported at successive monitoring inspections.
- Senior leaders understand the actions that are necessary to secure full compliance with the independent school standards and the national minimum standards for boarding schools. Their plans for improving the school are clear and appropriate. Senior leaders have worked effectively on a wide range of policies and systems. Over time, these are becoming more embedded in the day-to-day work of staff.
- Senior leaders have demonstrated the capacity to improve safeguarding work at the school. The advisory governance board has provided significant support to senior leaders to improve safeguarding work. However, the improvements in systems have not yet led to a consistently robust response when concerns are raised about pupils' welfare. Consequently, despite the improvement in this area of the school's work, this standard remains unmet.

Boarding provision

The national minimum standards that were assessed during this inspection

Standard 11.1

- As a result of training and advice, senior leaders understand the principles of risk assessment. They are now able to identify and mitigate the risks posed to pupils in a range of situations.
- Senior leaders ensure that there is appropriate management of medicines at the school. Pupils are given clear guidance about the use of medicines and the new systems to store medication are being used effectively.
- Senior leaders have ensured that there is an effective system in place to meet pupils' individual medical needs. When pupils have particular specialist needs, senior leaders work diligently alongside parents and healthcare professionals to gain a clear understanding of these needs. Pupils' health and well-being are at the centre of staff practice.
- Leaders' assessment of potential risks to pupils is now effective and their management of medicines in the boarding provision is good. However, the speed and rigour of senior leaders' handling of incidents involving pupils' welfare are still not good enough. Too often, when concerns arise, they are not dealt with according to the school's own guidelines. This national minimum standard is still not met.

Standard 13.4

- This standard relates to the overall quality of leadership in the boarding provision. As in the leadership of the school, current senior leaders have good capacity to improve the boarding provision. For example, the work they have carried out to improve the use of risk assessments and their work to sharpen the management of medicines demonstrate this. However, this overarching standard is not met because leaders and managers have not yet ensured that all the national minimum standards are fully met.

Standard 14.1

- Senior leaders follow safer recruitment guidelines when staff are appointed to work in the boarding provision. As a result, all new members of staff have been assessed as suitable and safe to be working with children.
- Senior leaders make sure that recruitment interviews are led effectively. Candidates are questioned in detail about their knowledge and experience of safeguarding practice. As a result, their suitability to work with pupils in the boarding provision is fully explored and confirmed before any appointment is made.
- The improvement in these procedures means that standard 14 of the national minimum standards for boarding schools, relating to safer recruitment of staff in charge of boarders, is now fully met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements and national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school does not meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards'), the national minimum standards for boarding schools and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection, as set out in the annex of this report. 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.

School details

Unique reference number	137950
Social care unique reference number	SC472610
DfE registration number	803/6008
Inspection number	10084375

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.

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

Type of school	Independent school
School status	Independent boarding school
Age range of pupils	10 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	30
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	0
Number of part-time pupils	0
Number of boarders on roll	29
Proprietor	Salah Ayche
Chair	Ralph Tabberer
Headteacher	Amanda Woods
Annual fees (day pupils)	£15,480–£16,650
Annual fees (boarders)	£25,950–£27,900
Telephone number	01225 891 841
Website	ashwickehallschool.sabis.net
Email address	info@ashwicke.sabis.net

Date of previous standard inspection

3–5 May 2017

Information about this school

- Ashwicke Hall School is a co-educational boarding school. It is part of the SABIS international family of schools, which operates schools in 20 countries.
- The vast majority of pupils are boarders. They are accommodated in two boarding houses on the school site.
- Most pupils attend Ashwicke Hall for a single term, coming either from another SABIS school or from a partner school in Shanghai. Some pupils attend the school for longer periods. The main language of tuition is English.
- The school has an advisory governance board. This was established following the previous full inspection in May 2017.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

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 and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- The school's previous standard inspection took place on 3–5 May 2017. Since then, two progress monitoring inspections have taken place. One was on 12 February 2018 and one on 9 May 2018. This is the third progress monitoring inspection of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the principal, senior leaders, the chair of the advisory governance board and one other governor. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the proprietor.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including minutes of advisory governance board meetings, senior leadership team meetings, the school's action plan, safeguarding documents and the school's review of its own performance.
- This was an integrated inspection and so inspectors considered both the school and the boarding provision. Inspectors visited classrooms to speak to pupils about their work and hear their views about the school. Inspectors spoke to pupils informally at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Inspectors spoke to staff with responsibility for the boarding provision. They visited the boarding accommodation and the medical centre.

Inspection team

Paul Williams, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sharron Escott	Social Care Regulatory Inspector
David Kidner	Social Care Regulatory Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

Standards that were not met at the previous inspection and remain un-met at this inspection

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that—
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 8 Where section 87(1) of the 1989 Act[11] applies in relation to a school the standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that—
 - 8(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders while they are accommodated at the school; and
 - 8(b) such arrangements have regard to the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools or, where applicable, the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools or the National Minimum Standards for Accommodation of Students under Eighteen by Further Education Colleges.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school—
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

The school now meets the following independent school standards

- 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if—
 - 18(2)(f) in the case of staff who care for, train, supervise or are in charge of boarders, in addition to the matters specified in paragraphs (a) to (e), the proprietor checks that Standard 14 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools is complied with, and in the light of the information from the checks referred to in paragraphs (c) to (f) the proprietor considers that the person is suitable for the position to which the person is appointed.

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

Standards that were not met at the previous inspection and remain un-met at this inspection

- 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's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met (NMS 13.4).

The school now meets the following national minimum standards for boarding schools

- Schools operate safe recruitment and adopt recruitment procedures in line with the regulatory requirements and having regard to relevant guidance issued by the Secretary of State. (NMS 14.1)

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