

Shaftesbury School

Sherborne Area Schools Trust

Shaftesbury School, Salisbury Road, Shaftesbury, Dorset SP7 8ER

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

Shaftesbury School is a co-educational academy catering for students aged 11 to 18. The school can provide accommodation for over 100 boarders. At the time of the inspection, the school had 58 boarders, the majority of which are international students. The boarders are accommodated at Barton Hill House, which is situated a short walk away from the main school site.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspection on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 3 March 2020 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

The last full inspection of the boarding provision took place in May 2017.

Inspection dates: 8 to 10 February 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
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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.

Date of last inspection: 16 May 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

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

Boarders' views about their boarding experiences are mixed. Most boarders say that they like boarding and are especially pleased with the friendships they have made. Some boarders described the boarding provision as having a 'family feel'. Most boarders say that they have developed their independence skills and they are very pleased with their educational achievements. To further improve their boarding experience, the boarders told the inspectors that they would like the quality and variety of the food provided in the evening to improve. Some boarders have recently raised concerns to staff about theft of their personal belongings. Action was taken in response, and boarders have facilities in their rooms to lock away personal and valuable items. However, some boarders told inspectors that the disrespect for each other's belongings remains a concern. Some boarders would also like to have access to their mobile devices later than the current time.

Good systems are in place to consult with boarders and find out their views about their boarding life. An increased number of boarders are actively involved in council groups. The outcomes of these council meetings have had a positive impact on improving the boarding environment, developing the school and helping the local community. Further work is needed to ensure that boarders receive feedback from staff on the points they raise about their boarding experiences.

Boarders are consulted about activities on offer and spoke positively about several day trips out. However, some boarders told the inspectors that they find some weekends long and boring. Boarders would like to see a greater variety of activities offered at the weekend.

All boarders can identify a member of staff that they feel comfortable with and who they enjoy spending time with. Some boarders referred to one member of staff as an 'icon' because she is approachable and comforts them when they are worried or missing their family. In contrast, some boarders said that there is one member of boarding staff who they choose not to spend time with because, in their view, the member of staff is often unapproachable and not a fun person to be with.

The school provides a range of services to help boarders with welfare and pastoral matters. Some boarders have seen the school counsellor and told the inspectors they find this helpful. Welfare plans and risk assessments are introduced when there is a concern about a boarder's welfare or well-being. More work is needed to ensure that these plans include specific instructions for staff about how to help the boarders to manage their anxieties.

Boarders know how to make a complaint and do so when needed. However, some boarders do not always feel confident that their concerns are taken seriously. Some

boarders told the inspectors that they do not know what actions are taken when they have complained. Records of complaints require improvement to ensure that the outcomes and follow up with boarders are always documented.

Boarders are achieving their educational targets well in comparison to non-boarders. Boarders' attitude towards learning is positive because they are supported to study outside of the school day. Boarders have access to computers and the internet, and good use is made of study time.

The quality of the boarding provision has improved. Boarding areas are nicely decorated, clean and well maintained. Improvements in the environment since the last inspection mean that the boarding provision is warm and welcoming. Boarders can personalise their bedrooms. Notice boards provide boarders with access to important information about welfare matters such as mental health, LGBTQ and healthy living.

The COVID-19 pandemic has, in the main, been managed well in the boarding provision. Self-isolation facilities have helped to reduce the spread of the virus. Despite this, boarders experience of self-isolation is mixed. A complaint was raised and investigated about the lack of adult contact and time outside that one boarder experienced as well as poorly delivered food. Since the complaint, staff now make more regular visits to boarders who are self-isolating in order to check on them, time outside has increased, and meals are more appropriate.

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

Despite good safeguarding policies being in place and staff receiving regular training, child protection processes are not always followed effectively in the boarding provision. On two occasions, the head of boarding carried out internal investigations prior to referring information to the local authority designated officer. On these occasions, the actions did not compromise the boarder's safety, but have the potential to do so if this poor practice is allowed to continue.

A helpful safeguarding recording system is in use. Despite this, records of safeguarding concerns in the boarding provision are not well maintained; they do not detail all actions taken and often lack important information. This prevents evidence of a necessary audit trail.

A clear system is in place to promote positive behaviour. Most boarders like the reward system and said that consequences are usually fair. However, several boarders say that the implementation of sanctions is sometimes inconsistent. Staff also share this view. More consistently positive and restorative approaches are required.

Boarders are advised about how to access local health services. If assessed to do so, boarders are able to manage their own medication. Controlled medication and

homely remedies held by staff are stored and administered appropriately. Staff have received training in the safe administration of medication.

The environment that boarders live in is kept safe. Environmental checks are completed regularly. Boarders engage in fire evacuations, and appliances are regularly serviced.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Monitoring and oversight by leaders, managers and governors of the boarding provision and boarders' experiences are inadequate.

Leaders and managers have failed to ensure that safeguarding, behaviour and complaint policies are consistently followed. As a result, leaders and managers cannot assure themselves that boarders are always safe and happy in the boarding provision.

All boarding staff have completed basic mandatory training. This includes first aid and administering medication. Some staff have had more varied and specialist training, but not all. Some boarding staff do not have training in supporting boarders who have complex needs in relation to mental health, self-harm and attachment.

Appraisals take place annually, but not all boarding staff receive ongoing, regular and effective supervision. Records of these meetings do not consistently demonstrate that reflective practice discussions are held or if the member of staff's professional development has been considered.

Most boarders' experience with one member of staff is poor. Boarders have said this member of staff's approach is at times cold and uncaring. Boarders say they have told staff, but nothing has changed. Insufficient action has been taken to address the repeated concerns raised about this member of staff.

Boarding staff are assessed as safe to work with boarders. Recruitment records are well maintained. Despite this, not all references are verified as required, and one file showed that only one reference of recent previous employment was obtained.

An independent listener is advertised as available to boarders. However, this person has yet to commit to visiting the boarding provision despite being invited three times. Insufficient action has been taken to remedy this situation.

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 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. (NMS 6.3)
- 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)
- Reasonable protection is provided for boarders' personal possessions and for any boarders' money or valuables looked after by the school. (NMS 9.3)
- 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 governing body and/or proprietor monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school and takes appropriate action where necessary. (NMS 13.1)
- The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate. (NMS 13.8)

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that boarding staff receive regular, good-quality opportunities to reflect on their practice, and that concerns about boarding staff performance are addressed swiftly.
- The registered person should ensure that boarders receive feedback on the suggestions or comments they make about their boarding experiences.
- The registered person should ensure that all boarding staff receive specialist training to help them to meet boarders' individual needs.
- The registered person should review the approach to behaviour management, ensuring that it is restorative and consistently implemented.

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: SC042320

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mrs Donna London-Hill

Type of school: Boarding School

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Inspectors

Sharron Escott, Social Care Inspector (lead)

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