

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 that caters for students aged 11 to 18 years. At the time of the inspection, the school had 24 boarders, and the majority are international students.

The last full inspection of the boarding provision took place in February 2022.

Inspection dates: 24 to 26 January 2023

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	requires improvement to be good
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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.

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Date of last inspection: 7 February 2022

Inspection judgements

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

Boarders' overall experiences and progress are mixed. Boarders engaged well in this inspection; they welcomed the opportunity to share their views about their boarding experiences. Most boarders said that they like boarding and that their academic achievements and skills around independence have improved since boarding at this school. Most boarders said that their boarding experience has increased their friendship groups and introduced them to peers from a diverse range of cultures. All boarders said that bullying is not a concern.

Boarders report that improvements have been made to the quality and variety of food provided since the last inspection. However, some boarders say that breakfast is uninviting and repetitive.

Boarders confirmed that there has been improvement with the advertising and availability of evening and weekend activities. The current activity programme includes some mandatory attendance. The new head of boarding said that this has been introduced to promote boarders' interaction with each other so that they can develop new friendships. Some boarders said that some of the mandatory activities do not interest them and they would prefer to spend time with friends of their choice.

Leaders and managers have introduced improved opportunities for boarders to share their views. These include committee meetings, comment cards, house meetings and mentoring discussions. Despite these opportunities, some boarders say that they are not always consulted or informed when new rules are introduced, and that not all staff consistently follow the new rules.

Boarders told inspectors that they would like the current curfew time to be extended at the weekends. They also said that they would like to have access to their mobile devices later than the current time. School leaders have not yet identified ways to help boarders develop more age-appropriate independence in these areas. Several children have a good level of autonomy and self-motivation working jobs in the local community. This provides them with opportunities to develop important life skills.

In general, boarders' health needs are met well. Systems are in place for the safe management of medication. However, not all boarders who are potentially competent are provided with an opportunity to manage their own medication.

There has been an increase of incidents that involve some boarders being under the influence of alcohol and in possession of vapes and smoking paraphernalia. When these incidents occur, the head of boarding speaks with boarders to provide support and the opportunity of a doctor's appointment.

Welfare plans are in place for boarders who require additional support and monitoring. Despite this, these plans do not provide boarding staff with sufficient information and guidance on how to support some children's diagnosed and changing needs. Leaders and managers acknowledged these plans require further development.

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

All boarding staff have completed safeguarding training and regularly attend refresher courses. In the main, boarding staff are aware of their role and responsibilities. However, they do not always apply their knowledge in practice. Reporting systems are in place, but not always used effectively. Incidents of potential safeguarding concerns are not always reported to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or recorded on the system that is designed to share this information. This prevents effective oversight and a necessary audit trail.

Since the last inspection, a new safeguarding team has been appointed. The DSL and deputy designated officers have completed the required training to fulfil their role and responsibilities. The safeguarding team meet weekly to review new and ongoing safeguarding concerns. Agreed actions are shared with the headteacher and safeguarding governor.

Safer recruitment processes are maintained. However, references are not verified, and interview records do not show how the interviewers have assessed the candidate's suitability when they have not worked in a boarding provision before.

The boarding house is kept safe. Environmental checks are completed regularly. Clear processes are in place to ensure site safety for boarders. Boarders take part in regular fire evacuation drills; however, records do not detail staff participation.

In the main, boarders' behaviour is positive. However, the management of some unwanted behaviours is inconsistent. Sanctions are not always restorative or proportionate. For example, sanctions given for breaking the boarding house rules are inconsistent. Prior to the new behaviour policy being implemented in September 2022, some boarders were grounded for between one week to three weeks for the same behaviour. Management oversight of these sanctions requires improvement, and more-consistent and restorative approaches are required.

The school's current safeguarding and complaints policy that is accessible on the school's website requires review. Both policies do not include sufficient information about the boarding provision.

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

Since the last inspection, the trustees, senior leaders, and managers have taken robust action to address the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. They commissioned an external agency to review the operation of the boarding provision. The findings from this review and internal audits have been used to compile a detailed action plan. Progress in meeting this plan is regularly reviewed.

In September 2023, a new head of boarding and head of house were appointed. They are ambitious and driven to make the necessary improvements. Senior leaders' and managers' oversight of the boarding provision have improved significantly. Changes made include the introduction of weekly staff briefings, daily handovers, and a daily logbook so that boarding staff can share any pertinent information. Leaders and managers recognise that they are not yet where they would like to be, and the changes introduced are in their infancy and not yet embedded.

All boarding staff have completed the newly introduced induction training programme. Despite this, not all boarding staff have completed basic mandatory training or specialist training courses, such as in autistic spectrum disorder and drug and alcohol misuse, that will help them to understand and respond effectively to some boarders' current needs.

Boarding staff do not receive regular formal supervision. In addition, not all boarding staff have had their performance appraised. This does not provide boarding staff with the support that they need to develop their skills, work as a team, and deliver consistent care.

An independent listener has been appointed. Boarders confirmed that they have the information that they need to contact him directly if they should wish to speak to him independently.

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:

- 2.1 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.
- 7.2 Boarders are supported and educated to understand their health needs, and how to develop and maintain a healthy lifestyle and make informed decisions about their own health.
- 7.7 Boarders' confidentiality, rights, privacy and dignity as patients are fundamental and are appropriately protected. This includes the right of a boarder deemed to be 'Gillick Competent' to give or withhold consent for their own treatment.
- 8.1 The school should ensure 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.
- 19.1 Schools operate safer recruitment and adopt recruitment procedures in line with the regulatory requirements, and have regard to relevant guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 20.1 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.

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)

Clare Nixon, Social Care Inspector

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