

Ashwicke Hall School

Ashwicke Hall, Marshfield, Chippenham, Wiltshire SN14 8AG

Inspection dates

12 February 2018

Overall outcome

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

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b)

- In the past, there have been significant weaknesses in the safeguarding culture of the school. The new principal, appointed in November 2017, is working hard to address these. Since appointed, all policies have been reviewed and updated to meet requirements. However, leaders have not ensured that policies and procedures now in place are being effectively implemented to keep pupils safe.
- The new principal has ensured that staff have received comprehensive safeguarding training. For example, they have gained an increased understanding of the dangers of child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and the risks pupils are exposed to when using social media. The creation of a comprehensive record enables the leaders to have an oversight of the completion of safeguarding training. The school's safeguarding policy on the school's website takes account of the most recent government guidance, 'Keeping children safe in education' September 2016. Nevertheless, leaders do not ensure that all staff understand and implement the school's policies consistently.
- Recently, the new designated safeguarding lead (DSL) has undergone substantial training to enable her to be suitably qualified. However, given that her role as DSL is only part of her job responsibility, she is unable to carry out her duties effectively.
- The principal reports that safeguarding is now a regular agenda item at the weekly senior leadership team meetings. However, leaders have not ensured that all incidents are fully investigated or referred to the designated officer for safeguarding of the local authority, when required. Consequently, pupils' safety and welfare are compromised.
- These standards remain unmet.

Paragraph 9, 9(b)

- At the time of the previous inspection, some staff raised concerns about the behaviour of some pupils. They noted that they did not always receive the training and guidance they needed to ensure that pupils' behaviour was consistently good. During this inspection, pupils were working eagerly in their lessons and responding well to their teachers. They moved around the school site sensibly and were polite and courteous at mealtimes. Pupils fully understand that mobile phones are not permitted during the school day.
- Pupils who met with one of the inspectors were adamant that there is very little poor

behaviour. They explained that any of the rare incidents were dealt with swiftly. Pupils reported that the rewards for good behaviour and sanctions for poor behaviour are fair. The behaviour log indicates that the use of sanctions is minimal. This demonstrates the improvements that have been made in behaviour since the previous inspection.

- Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about a recent anti-bullying week that they had taken part in. Activities such as drama events, competitions and research-based presentations effectively promote their knowledge and awareness of any potential bullying incidents in and around school.
- This standard is met.

Paragraph 11

- The new health and safety policy has been implemented effectively across the school, including the boarding provision, and is inclusive of activities outside of normal school hours. The policy takes into account all the appropriate legislation, including the Equality Act 2010. Other school policies are appropriately cross-referenced within the policy. This ensures consistency in its application.
- This standard is met.

Paragraph 12

- At the previous inspection in May 2017, it was noted that the leadership and management of fire safety was weak. It was reported that not all fire doors closed and evacuation drills did not take place regularly. During this visit it was noted that fire doors in the boarding accommodation now close automatically. There is clear evidence of safety equipment checks and records indicate that regular fire drills now take place. As a result, staff and pupils understand and implement the actions they need to take in the event of fire.
- This standard is met.

Paragraph 14

- The proprietor has increased staffing levels since the previous inspection. This means that pupils are well supervised. For example, staff members are present on the corridors during lesson changeover times. Staff sit by the pupils during mealtimes and take turns as a duty teacher to oversee the smooth running of this part of the school day.
- If pupils become ill during school time, a number of initial checks are made before pupils are accompanied to the boarding accommodation for medical care. This ensures that they are kept safe and well cared for at all times.
- This standard is met.

Paragraph 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- The appointment of a 'student life co-ordinator' has brought rigour and consistency to the school's approach to risk assessment. Risk assessments are systematically carried out for all activities, both in and out of school. They are carefully evaluated into differing risk categories and adapted appropriately to meet both the differing needs of age groups and specific individuals. As a result, pupils are kept safe both in the school site and when they venture further afield on trips and educational visits.
- This standard is met.

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

Paragraph 18, 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c)(ii), 18(2)(d), 18(2)(f), 18(3), 21(1), 21(2), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(i) to (viii), 21(3)(b)

- The previous inspection reported that processes for recruiting staff did not meet requirements. For example, checks on staff were not completed prior to them starting in post.
- The human resources manager has attended safer recruitment training and has recently compiled a single central record which takes account of checks required to safeguard pupils.
- There is evidence that appropriate checks are made prior to staff taking up appointment. These include checks on identity, qualifications, and evidence of any criminal records. The school also checks whether potential staff are barred from working with young people and have the right to work in the UK. However, verification of authenticity is not consistently sought or gaps in employment rigorously checked. This applies both to the school and the residential provision. The school's systems to obtain references are not sufficiently rigorous, which places pupils at risk.
- This standard remains unmet.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 25

- No concerns relating to the premises in the school were found during this inspection.
- This standard is now met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)

- At the previous full inspection in May 2017, safeguarding procedures were judged to be ineffective. There were numerous unmet independent school standards and unmet national minimum standards for boarding schools.
- The original action plan submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) was judged to be inadequate.
- The proprietor has reorganised the management of the school. The new principal was appointed in November 2017 and a governance board has been recently established. They have used the expertise of external consultants to help them produce a very detailed action plan, outlining clearly how all the unmet standards and areas that need improving will be rectified. Proposed actions link closely to the concerns raised in the previous inspection report. Roles and responsibilities are clearly recorded with measurable outcomes, and progress made against the planned actions are regularly reviewed and evaluated.
- However, progress is too slow. There continue to be unmet standards, particularly those relating to keeping pupils safe.
- Although a number of positive improvements have been made to the leadership and management of the school, the proprietor has not yet secured a rigorous culture of safeguarding. The welfare needs of pupils are not being fully met.

- These standards remain unmet.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school has ensured that it has made arrangements to meet the requirements of paragraph 3 of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.
- This standard is met.

School details

Unique reference number	137950
Social care unique reference number	SC472610
DfE registration number	803/6008
Inspection number	10043512

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 residential 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 residential special schools.

Type of school	Independent school
School status	Independent boarding school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	51
Number of part-time pupils	0
Number of boarders on roll	50
Proprietor	SABIS International School, UK
Principal	Amanda Woods
Annual fees (day pupils)	£15,000
Annual fees (boarders)	£24,900 to £26,700
Telephone number	01225 891841
Website	https://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 was registered in February 2012 as a co-educational boarding school for 247 pupils aged 11 to 18. The school is part of the SABIS school network located across the world.
- The school is based at Ashwicke Hall, a period building situated in extensive grounds in a rural location near to the city of Bath, in the south west of England.
- All pupils speak English and most speak an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- There are no pupils who come into the category of being regarded as disadvantaged through being known to be eligible for free school meals or being looked after.
- The school does not receive any sports funding.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- Students take both IGCSE and Advance Placement External Exams at the school, which is a certified examination centre for both Cambridge IGCSE Exams (UK) and the College Board Advance Placements Exams (USA).

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted without notice. It 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 in May 2017.
- This was an integrated inspection; the school and the boarding accommodation were inspected at the same time. School and social care inspectors worked together during the inspection.
- The school's action plan was deemed inadequate following its submission to the Department for Education in August 2017.
- The lead Her Majesty's Inspector met with the principal and an external consultant. Inspectors also met with both teaching and non-teaching staff to ascertain the progress made since the previous inspection towards meeting all the required standards of the independent school standards and the national minimum standards for boarding.
- The lead Her Majesty's Inspector visited classrooms and looked at pupils' workbooks. The social care regulatory inspectors visited the boarding accommodation. They met with teaching staff, boarding staff and a nurse.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils both formally and informally.
- Inspectors met with the designated lead for safeguarding and reviewed pupils' and staff files and records.

Inspection team

Lorna Brackstone, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sharron Escott, social care lead inspector	Social Care Regulatory Inspector
David Kidner, social care team inspector	Social Care Regulatory Inspector
Paula Lahey, regulatory inspector	Regulatory Inspector Manager

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