

Ashwicke Hall School

Ashwicke Hall, Marshfield, Chippenham, Wiltshire SN14 8AG

Inspection dates

9 May 2018

Overall outcome

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

Residential 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 progress monitoring inspection that took place in February 2018, the school did not meet this standard as safeguarding policies and procedures were not being effectively implemented to keep pupils safe.
- Leaders have made a number of improvements to the school's safeguarding procedures. The designated safeguarding lead has been given more time to carry out her role and her office has been relocated in order to make her more accessible to pupils. Leaders have worked well to improve the quality of safeguarding records, especially the recording of contacts with external agencies such as children's services. Leaders' management of allegations against staff is also much improved and better recorded. The school makes timely referrals to the designated officer where necessary.
- The school's safeguarding policy is published on the school's website, as required, and pays due regard to the guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- The proprietor and the school's leadership team have not ensured that the school's safer recruitment processes are robust enough. This was identified as a concern at the progress monitoring inspection in February 2018 and actions to address this situation have not been effective.
- The school's processes to obtain references for prospective employees remain weak. School leaders do not follow up any gaps or missing information in references tenaciously enough. This undermines the usefulness of references that leaders receive regarding prospective employees.
- Leaders do not use interviews to probe prospective employees' understanding of safeguarding or their motivation for wanting to work with children. Records of interviews are poor. This compounds the shortcomings in the school's processes to obtain references.

- Recently, the school has chosen to allow members of staff to start work in regulated activity before their Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate is available. While this is allowed by the statutory guidance in 'Keeping children safe in education', 2016, the school's processes to ensure that pupils are safe during this period lack rigour. In particular, the risk assessments only consider risks to the member of staff rather than aiming at mitigating any risk to pupils while the school waits for the DBS certificate to become available.
- As a result of these shortcomings in safer recruitment, the standard in this paragraph remains unmet.

Paragraph 8–8(b)

- At the time of the previous progress monitoring inspection, the school did not meet the standard in this paragraph as arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders were not secure. The national minimum standards for boarding schools were not met in full.
- Leaders have still not ensured that the national minimum standards for boarding schools are met in full. This includes some national minimum standards that relate to safeguarding and safer recruitment.
- The standard in this paragraph remains unmet.

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

Paragraph 18(2), 18(2)(f), 18(3)

- In February 2018, this standard was not met as there were clear shortcomings in the school's recruitment processes, including failure to undertake the necessary checks prior to staff starting their jobs.
- School records indicate that leaders are now making appropriate checks on staff prior to the start of their employment, although they are not always precisely recorded.
- The proprietor has not ensured that standard 14 of the national minimum standards for boarding schools relating to safer recruitment of staff in charge of boarders is met (as required by paragraph 18(2)(f) of the independent school standards).
- As a result, the standard contained in paragraph 18(2) remains unmet.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1)–34(1)(c)

- At the time of the previous progress monitoring inspection this standard was unmet as the proprietor and leaders had not ensured that all the independent school standards and national minimum standards were met. Progress towards meeting them was too slow.
- Since that inspection, the proprietor and school leaders have undertaken substantial work to improve the school's processes and procedures, especially regarding safeguarding. As a result, the quality of safeguarding records, for example, has improved markedly.
- In contrast, however, the school's recruitment practices have not improved. The principles of safer recruitment are not securely understood and, as a result, recruitment practice is not robust enough to minimise risk to children.

- The proprietor and school leaders are still not demonstrating the ability to meet the independent school standards and national minimum standards for boarding schools consistently.
- Therefore, the standard in this part remains unmet.

Boarding provision

Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools that were assessed during this inspection

Standard 3.4

- The management of medication has improved significantly. Leaders have appointed two nurses, whose registration status has been verified. They have introduced new systems to manage, monitor and dispense medication. Records comprehensively detail stock balances, and the dispensing and administered of medication. Pupils are prohibited from bringing medication from overseas. In the event prohibited medication is found, nurses collect and store it in lockable facilities within the medical room. These are given back to pupils when they return home.
- This standard is now met.

Standard 11.1

- Risk assessments for staff who commence employment before the results of disclosure and barring checks have been received are inadequate. Leaders and managers have failed to consider and identify how to mitigate and manage any risks.
- Leaders have not established robust monitoring systems for children who self-administer medication. Although pupil contracts are in place, not all children ensure that their medication is safely stored.
- This standard remains unmet.

Standard 13.1

- Leaders and the proprietor have increased their oversight of the school's performance. They demonstrate determination and dedication to strengthen the management of safeguarding procedures. Leaders have developed a comprehensive action plan to respond to unmet minimum standards. Monitoring systems have improved, and where concerns are identified appropriate action is taken.
- This standard is now met.

Standard 13.3

- Leaders and managers demonstrate the skills and knowledge appropriate to their role. Progress has been made in meeting six of the nine unmet national minimum standards identified at the previous progress monitoring visit. Further work is required to strengthen the recruitment and selection of staff and safeguarding procedures.
- This standard is now met.

Standard 13.4

- Despite recent improvements leaders and managers have not ensured that all national minimum standards are fully met.

- This standard remains unmet.

Standard 13.5

- Boarders' opportunities and experiences have improved. Leaders have introduced new systems and procedures that enable pupils to express their views, promote their privacy, meet their healthcare needs and allow them to relax in communal areas that are spacious, personalised and well resourced.
- This standard is now met.

Standard 13.9

- Leaders and managers' oversight and management of safeguarding concerns have improved. Effective links have been established with safeguarding agencies. Safeguarding records are well maintained. They now demonstrate more clearly the actions taken and the outcome.
- This standard is now met.

Standard 14.1

- Staff recruitment, selection and vetting lack rigour. Leaders and managers have not challenged incomplete references or identified gaps in employment dates. Interview notes are poor. They do not indicate in any detail whether an individual's suitability, experience or safeguarding knowledge has been explored. Risk assessments for those staff who start work before their DBS certificate is available are inadequate.
- This standard remains unmet.

Standard 14.3

- Leaders have now ensured that DBS checks and written agreements are obtained for adults who are not employees but who live on the school site.
- This standard is now 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	10052095

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 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	72
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	0
Number of part-time pupils	0
Number of boarders on roll	71
Proprietor	The International School of Choueifat (Mr Salah Ayche)
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	awoods@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 with a maximum capacity of 247 pupils. It currently takes a small number of day pupils.
- Most pupils attend Ashwicke Hall for a single term, coming either from another SABIS school or from a partner school in Shanghai.
- The main language of tuition is English, except on some occasions where foreign languages are taught.
- The school's previous standard inspection took place on 3–5 May 2017. Since then it has received one progress monitoring visit on 12 February 2018.
- The school has an advisory governing body, of which the proprietor is a member.
- 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.
- This was the school's second progress monitoring visit since the standard inspection that took place in May 2017. The first monitoring inspection took place on 12 February 2018.
- After the previous standard inspection, the Department for Education asked the school to produce an action plan, which was judged not to meet requirements in September 2017.
- The inspection was conducted without notice.
- This was an integrated inspection which looked at both the school and the boarding provision. Inspectors held discussions with school leaders, the proprietor, members of the advisory governing body, including the chair, and other staff. The inspection team visited classrooms and the boarding accommodation, including the medical centre. They also looked at a wide range of documentation provided by the school.

Inspection team

Stephen Lee, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sharron Escott

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

- 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 or, where applicable, Standard 14 of the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special 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.

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(3) The checks referred to in sub-paragraphs (2)(c) and (except where sub-paragraph (4) applies) (2)(e) must be completed before a person's appointment.

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

Standards that were not met at the previous inspection and remain unmet 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 13.5).
- 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).

The school now meets the following national minimum standards for residential special schools

- 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'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 school's leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role (NMS 13.3).
- The school's leadership and management and governance actively promote the wellbeing of pupils (NMS 13.5).
- The issues specified in Appendix 3 are monitored, and action is taken to improve outcomes for children as appropriate (NMS 13.9).
- There is a written agreement between the school and any person over 16 not employed by the school but living in the same premises as children (for example, members of staff households). This specifies the terms of their accommodation, guidance on contact with pupils, their responsibilities to supervise their visitors, and notice that accommodation may cease to be provided if there is evidence that they are unsuitable to have regular contact with pupils. They must be required to notify an unrelated designated senior member of staff if they are charged with, or convicted of, any offence (NMS 14.3).

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