

The New Eccles Hall School

Eccles Hall School, Eccles, NORWICH, NR16 2NZ

Inspection dates	17/06/2014 to 19/06/2014	
Overall effectiveness	Adequate	3
Outcomes for residential pupils	Good	2
Quality of residential provision and care	Adequate	3
Residential pupils' safety	Adequate	3
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Adequate	3

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is adequate because

- Pupils generally enjoy their boarding experience. They develop sound relationships, resilience and confidence and make good progress socially and academically as a result of the care and support they receive.
- The boarding provision offers a range of resources and facilities to support individual development. However, some areas of the accommodation are poorly maintained and require improvement to ensure boarders access a high quality living environment.
- Senior managers in the school have addressed safeguarding shortfalls raised at the previous inspection. The systems and processes in place are more robust and promote the safety of boarders. Incidents of boarders going missing are rare, however, on one occasion the staff failed to implement the school policy. This has the potential to jeopardise individual safety.
- Boarders develop their knowledge and understanding of, and empathy with, peers from different cultures, ethnic backgrounds and with a range of differing needs. They enjoy equality of opportunity in accessing a range of experiences, services and support to promote their individual development.
- A number of national minimum standards remain unmet. However, there has been a short period of time since the last inspection and senior managers have prioritised safety issues. There is a plan in place to address shortfalls pertaining to staff qualifications, performance management, monitoring, and reviewing the boarding provision. Senior managers demonstrate a commitment to making the required improvements.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools. The details are listed in the full report.

Information about this inspection

The welfare inspection of the three boarding houses making up the residential provision was undertaken by two inspectors following a notice period of three hours. The inspection activities included; meetings with matrons, catering staff, senior managers, the proprietor, boarding staff, boarders, parents and social workers, scrutiny of policies and records and observation of practice and boarding routines. Parents gave feedback directly to inspectors through questionnaires, email communication and in telephone discussions.

Inspection team

Louisa Bayley	Lead social care inspector
Deirdra Keating	Social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

New Eccles Hall School is an independent residential special school situated in the Norfolk countryside between Norwich and Thetford. The school accepts children of mixed ability, some with specific learning difficulties for whom special education facilities are available.

The school accepts day pupils from the age of four to seventeen years. Residential accommodation is offered to pupils aged eight years and above. The school has three separate boarding houses within the grounds. Junior boys are accommodated in the main hall, senior boys in the main school area and girls are accommodated in the converted stable block behind the main hall. There is also a sixth form boarding house behind the hall. There are currently 40 boarders who are accommodated on a weekly or full boarding basis.

The residential provision was last inspected in March 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that supervision of boarders at weekends is clearly defined and that staff receive clear instruction on the levels of supervision they need to have in place.
- Add a risk assessment to each child protection file, to reflect the consideration given and mitigating actions in place to safeguard from potential future risk for the individual concerned.
- Extend the range and variety of after school activities available and suited to senior boarders
- **The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools.**
 - Accommodation is appropriately lit, heated and ventilated, cleaned and maintained, and reasonable adjustments are made to provide adequate accessible accommodation for any children with restricted mobility. The accommodation contains suitable specialist facilities to support children whose disabilities require them. (NMS 5.4)
 - There is clear leadership and management of the practice and development of residential and care provision in the school, and effective links are made between academic and residential staff. The school's governing body or proprietor has a system to monitor care and welfare provision in the school. (NMS 13.1)
 - Staff working within the school know and implement the school's policy, and where relevant the local authority's policy, in relation to children going missing and their role in implementing that policy. Staff actively search for children who are missing, including working with the police where appropriate. (NMS 15.6)
 - All existing care staff have attained a relevant minimum level 3 qualification or have qualifications which demonstrate the same competencies. All new staff engaged from the commencement of these Standards hold these qualifications or begin working towards them within 3 months of confirmation of employment. (NMS 19.2)
 - All staff have access to support and advice for their role. They also have regular supervision and formal annual appraisal of their performance. (NMS 19.6)
 - The governing body, trustees, partnership, or organisation responsible for carrying on the school arrange for one of their number, or a representative who does not work at, or directly manage, the school, to visit the school once every half term

and complete a written report on the conduct of the school. Where the school has an individual proprietor, that person may carry out such visits personally if they are not also the Headteacher (or school equivalent). (NMS 20.1)

- Most monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include: checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, use of physical interventions, risk assessments, and where they exist, individual care plans for children; assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the school; and opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet the visitor (in private if they wish). (NMS 20.2)
- Written reports of all monitoring visits are provided to the Headteacher (or school equivalent) and where applicable the governing body, organisation, or partnership. Reports are also provided to each member of that body (or the appropriate committee of that body), within two weeks and as written by the visitor without amendment or summary. (NMS 20.3)
- The Headteacher (or school equivalent), governing body, trustees, partnership, or organisation responsible for carrying on the school carries out, and records in writing, once each year: a review of the operation and resourcing of the school's welfare provision for boarding pupils, in relation to: its Statement of Purpose, its staffing policy, the placement plans for individual children; and an internal assessment of its compliance with these Standards. Where appropriate such a report may be incorporated within a review of the whole school. (NMS 20.4)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Good

The outcomes for boarders are good.

Boarders truly benefit from positive relationships with key staff members, helping them feel emotionally supported while living away from home. Boarders with diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds and learning abilities treat one another with consideration and kindness. They understand and accept their differences, which supports their ability to build positive, constructive relationships with peers. For boarders who arrive at the school without these skills, progress is significant and life changing. Consequently, individuals develop their confidence, self-esteem and emotional resilience.

Boarders' behaviour is good; they are polite and welcoming to visitors and treat adults and one another with respect. They demonstrate tolerance and care of one another, gently and appropriately reminding others of rules and etiquette around the school. This reinforces agreed expectations and provides positive peer role models for younger boarders

Boarders enjoy the residential experience. They cite supportive staff and established peer relationships as key to their happiness. They gain new interests and develop skills from taking part in activities and trips. Boarders regularly participate in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, annual trips abroad, off-road biking, swimming and horse riding. There is a variety of clubs held on the school site that younger boarders particularly enjoy. Boarders regularly attend community-based projects where they help children with disabilities. This promotes awareness of others and offers a positive contribution to the local community.

Boarders have opportunities to express individual views and make requests for new resources. They are able to feedback about the quality of food and menu options. They make active choices about evening and weekend activities and how they spend their time. Boarders are confident to approach staff and openly express their opinions. The school council provides a structured forum for boarders to contribute ideas and make suggested changes.

Boarders benefit from accessing health services managed by professional health workers who work in partnership with parents, carers and boarding staff. Boarders take part in physical outdoor activities and make full use of the extensive grounds and woods, keeping them physically fit. They benefit from healthy meal options and make good choices at meal times giving consideration to their health and wellbeing. Boarders regularly attend the medical centre for support with both their physical and psychological health. A parent said: 'Boarding has been an important step for him and has given additional opportunity to manage his medical condition away from home. Taking the steps to board demonstrates his feeling of security within the school, which has been excellent.'

Boarders anticipate their future and personal ambitions with enthusiasm. They have defined plans for the next stage of their lives, academically and socially. One boarder said: 'The school experience has helped me to prepare emotionally for being away from my parents and to manage being away from home'.

Quality of residential provision and care

Adequate

The quality of the residential provision is adequate. Good communication between education and boarding staff promotes consistent care and good behaviour management. Staff support boarders to become increasingly independent, enabling them to develop their social and self-care skills and achieve their academic goals. A parent said 'staff have really helped with many issues in respect

of relationships.'

The school uses an electronic database to record individual care requirements and health needs. This promotes consistency and enables staff to monitor all aspects of individual's development and care. Consequently, staff have the information they need to effectively implement care plans and to record changes in individual behaviour or progress. Sharing information in this way supports those experiencing difficulty as staff and parents are able to understand where issues arise. It is also a means of enabling positive reinforcement of good behaviour and achievements.

There is a variety of weekly clubs available to boarders that provide a range of on-site activities. These include; art, pottery, table tennis, sports clubs, shooting and archery. A weekend activity programme provides off-site activities and trips at weekends. Uptake is good for younger boarders, however, older boarders and parents say there are fewer choices aimed at the older age group.

Staff encourage boarders to take responsibility for their health and provide healthy role models. Food is freshly prepared and cooked from raw ingredients. Boarders are generally positive about the food and are observed to enjoy it. Lunch offers a wide selection of salads, hot options with homemade bread and fresh fruit. Evening meals are hot and appetising. Boarders pre-order any individual dietary requirements. Catering staff provide packed lunches for trips out and offer flexible meal times. They provide a good, child focused service that meets individual cultural and dietary needs.

The accommodation is split across the main school building and several prefabricated buildings on the school site. Boarders have ample space for communal activities and for privacy. The dining room is light, airy and promotes family style dining arrangements. The accommodation is generally homely, comfortable and clean. Despite this, some facilities are archaic and the décor is jaded. Parts of the sleeping accommodation are not maintained adequately. One bedroom has broken tiles on the windowsill and gaps at the top of the window where insulation materials are visible. There are small placards of wood covering damage to holes in the wall. Many carpets are stained and some furniture is tatty and torn. This breach of national minimum standard 5.4 does not help boarders take pride in the environment. The senior boys have beds with lockable drawers providing secure storage for personal belongings, although, these are not always used by boarders.

There are pay phones in each boarding house for boarders' sole use. Sixth form boarders have the use of personal mobile phones. Boarders are able to regularly contact families and speak to them while away from home.

Residential pupils' safety

Adequate

The safety of boarders is adequate.

At the last inspection the systems in place to record safeguarding concerns and subsequent action taken were ineffective and gave cause for serious concern. Since the last inspection, senior managers have taken action to address the shortfalls as a high priority. Detailed chronologies provide effective audit trails of events, actions taken and referrals to the appropriate external agencies. The improvements in place ensure that there is an effective record of all safeguarding issues, which is accessible to those who are authorised to view it. There is scope for further improvement in respect of producing clearly defined risk assessments and records of mitigating actions to protect against future incidents. Senior managers with safeguarding responsibilities do consider and employ strategies to protect individuals but do not currently produce robust records to reflect their actions.

There have been no incidents of restraint in the school. Staff set high expectations in respect of behaviour and regularly remind boarders of behavioural boundaries. This is effective in supporting individuals to improve their behaviour and to become more self-regulating.

Responsible staff ensure that the health and safety checks relating to the premises are current, with external checks in place to reduce the potential of hazards. Boarders regularly take part in fire evacuation drills and demonstrate good awareness of the procedures to follow in the case of a fire.

The head of boarding has introduced an excellent system to monitor and track incidents of bullying. The format of the system means that staff can interrogate the data to identify patterns and trends. The definitions of types of bullying behaviour make it clear to all staff how bullying should be categorised. The system serves to safeguard boarders. Boarders say there are sometimes incidents of bullying but they are confident that staff address issues as they happen.

The incidents of boarders going missing are very rare, with just this one incident since the last inspection. However, on this occasion, staff did not follow the procedure to ensure that parents were informed or to inform the police within the stated timeframe. This was an isolated incident; however, this breach of national minimum standard 15.6 has the potential to undermine safety and consistency of response if there are further incidents.

Leadership and management of the residential provision Adequate

The leadership and management of the boarding provision are adequate.

A number of national minimum standards were identified at the last inspection as unmet. However, in the short time since that inspection, senior managers have addressed issues of safeguarding as their priority. They have developed an action plan to address the remaining shortfalls and senior managers demonstrate a willingness and commitment to securing improvement.

Independent monitoring of the boarding provision and the annual review of boarding has not commenced. Consequently, national minimum standards 13.1, 20.1, 20.2, 20.3 and 20.4 remain unmet. There are plans in place to introduce the annual review of boarding in September 2014. The proprietor plans to commence the independent monitoring of the provision prior to the end of the summer term in 2014. The lack of monitoring means that the management team does not consistently identify shortfalls. Consequently, opportunities to make improvements are missed. Senior managers demonstrated during the inspection, a commitment to researching good practice in other schools in order to inform their implementation of an effective system.

There are sufficient staff on duty, with a good gender balance of staff across the boarding provision to meet the needs of the boarders. There are effective links between academic and social time, with appropriate support in place for boarders. The supervision of boarders at weekends appears to lack clear and defined expectations. Although boarders know how to contact the staff, there is a lack of clarity at times regarding senior staff expectations on some staff. This is in respect of where staff are located, the levels of supervision required and how often they need boarders to check-in with them, so they can be assured of their presence and safety at all times.

Boarding staff have good levels of experience and training, however, they do not all have qualifications relevant to boarding or residential care. Therefore, national minimum standard 19.2 remains unmet. There are plans in place to address this, in the form of a rolling programme that is due to commence in September 2014.

Boarding staff do not currently receive regular supervision or performance review, which is breach of national minimum standard 19.6. This is another area where plans are in place but have not yet been implemented. Some boarding staff have benefited from appraisals but this is not the case for all boarding staff. Lack of regular performance review means that practice issues and related support are not formally recorded.

The feedback from parents is generally good, although a very small number of parents raised some issues. The feedback from external professionals is very good, with some high praise, such as 'the school work exceptionally well as part of a multi-agency team to support the child.'

Boarders in the school continue to enjoy living in an environment that promotes inclusion, acceptance and equality of access to education, social and leisure opportunities and a good range of services and support. Boarders have a good understanding of different cultures and diverse individual characteristics because of their boarding experience.

At the time of inspection the school had received no formal complaints.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	121229
Social care unique reference number	SC027660
DfE registration number	926/6041

This inspection 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 Residential Special School
Number of boarders on roll	40
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	8 to 17
Headteacher	Mr R Allard
Date of previous boarding inspection	11/03/2014
Telephone number	01953 887217
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