

De Aston School

De Aston School Academy Trust

De Aston School, Willingham Road, Market Rasen, Lincolnshire LN8 3RF

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

De Aston School provides boarding accommodation for up to 65 children, who are mostly students from overseas. Accommodation is separate from the school building but situated within the grounds.

Inspection dates: 5 to 7 June 2018

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

The boarding school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Date of last inspection: 7 June 2016

Key findings from this inspection

This boarding school is good because:

- Children feel safe and secure.
- Children make significant progress in their academic studies. A large proportion of overseas students make excellent progress learning English, and benefit from the opportunities that boarding offers.
- Children enjoy a wide range of activities that includes clubs in the local community. This provides children with opportunities to form friendships outside the boarding house.
- Celebrating the different cultures of the overseas students who board is a strength of the boarding provision and greatly valued by the children.

- Leaders and managers are aspirational and have high standards for themselves, their staff and the children. They have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the boarding provision. Plans are in place to address identified shortfalls.

The boarding school's areas for development:

- Although there is strong leadership from the head of boarding, there is insufficient management capacity in the staffing team. The uneven distribution of senior staff on the rota has not been addressed, leaving some shifts without a senior. Capacity issues and staffing shortages have limited the support and supervision available to staff.
- Meals and mealtimes do not meet the diverse needs of the children.
- The sleeping accommodation could be improved.

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:

- Suitable sleeping accommodation is provided for boarders. (National Minimum Standard 5.1)
- 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. (National Minimum Standard 8.1)
- The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met. (National Minimum Standard 13.4)
- Any staff member or volunteer employed or volunteering in a position working with boarders receives regular reviews of their boarding practice, with opportunities for training and continual professional development in boarding. (National Minimum Standard 15.1)

Recommendations

- Consider holding regular meetings of the safeguarding team to discuss current cases and formalise reporting procedures. (Linked to National Minimum Standard 11)
- Consider centralising records of complaints from children to enable clear tracking of patterns and trends. (Linked to National Minimum Standard 17)

- Consider completing a maintenance audit of the boarding house to ensure that all areas requiring maintenance are addressed. (Linked to National Minimum Standard 6.2)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are happy and confident. They make significant progress in their academic studies. They are polite, helpful and engaging. Children particularly enjoy the diverse community they live in, saying that they like learning about the cultures of others. This is encouraged by the house parents who support them to be proud of their own identities, as well as respectful of others. Children generally get on well with their peers and say they feel like a family.

Children settle quickly due to an individually tailored induction package. For example, some children come to stay overnight prior to making a decision about boarding. Parents are welcomed and receive good information about the boarding house.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities including sports clubs within the local community. A child said: 'They make it possible for us to do things like volleyball and cricket.' Children also enjoy going to the cinema, bowling, shopping, street dance and doing arts and crafts, to mention just a few of the activities available.

Children have warm and supportive relationships with most staff. Children say that there is always someone in the house whom they can talk to if they have any problems or concerns. Staff are strong advocates for children. A child said that the head of boarding had 'stuck up for me in a meeting. He acted like my dad.'

Parents are assured of their children's safe travel arrangements because boarding staff take children to and from the train station or airport. This commitment from boarding staff ensures that children feel safe and confident.

Staff know children very well. Children report that school leaders are accessible. Children have good contact with their family and friends. This includes the opportunity to have friends over for sleepovers.

Children are looked after well when they are ill. They are easily able to contact staff during the night, who respond to them quickly. Care plans for children with chronic illnesses are good. The plans provide staff with the information that they need to ensure that children are well cared for. Children also have access to local healthcare professionals and a counselling service. This provides children with good physical and emotional support.

School and boarding staff work closely together to track children's educational attainment and ensure that all children make good progress. Attendance is closely

monitored so that boarders fully engage in the life of the school. A large proportion of overseas students make excellent progress in learning English. Support measures include an English language teacher and an independent listener, who also provides extra tuition. 'Prep' sessions are provided to help the boarders to complete homework.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Children are safe at this school. The safety of children is a high priority for all staff. The role of designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is given to members of the senior leadership team. The school has recently increased the number of safeguarding leads from one to three to ensure that there is good cover across the school. There is good management oversight of safeguarding concerns. Staff report concerns and 'nagging doubts' appropriately to the DSL. The DSLs work closely with external professionals to ensure that there is good communication and information sharing about safeguarding. However, reporting of serious safeguarding concerns could be improved further by formalising the process. Furthermore, the safeguarding team may benefit from regular meetings to discuss individual cases.

Staff consistently implement rules and boundaries. This promotes positive behaviour. Consequently, there are few incidents and these do not tend to be serious. Incidents are appropriately reviewed and learning points implemented. Parents are kept informed of any concerns regarding their child.

Children do not report bullying as an issue and where there have been incidents these have been dealt with quickly and appropriately. Sanctions are fair. Children in this boarding house do not go missing or run away.

Risk management plans are good. This enables boarders to have lots of opportunities to explore different interests, and gives them the chance to develop friendships in the local area. Currently, the head of boarding writes all the risk assessments. Staff could develop their skills by undertaking risk assessments. Vetting procedures help to protect children from unsuitable adults.

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

Leaders and managers in the boarding house have a clear vision to develop the sustainability of the boarding house and have been successful in attracting students to support its continued financial viability. They have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement. The recommendations from last inspection have now been addressed. However, further improvements are required.

The head of boarding is realistic about the need to improve the physical environment, but some improvements are overdue. He has appropriately made the governing body aware of the difficulties in addressing priorities for the boarding house. This has resulted in some improvements to facilities, but there is still more to do to ensure that the fabric of the building meets the high aspirations of the

leadership team.

Although there is strong leadership from the head of boarding, there is insufficient management capacity in the staffing team. The uneven distribution of seniors on the rota has not been addressed, leaving some shifts without a senior. Capacity issues and staffing shortages have affected the support and supervision of staff. Formal reviews of practice with staff are irregular. This has delayed progress in reviewing, challenging and improving practice in the boarding house and supporting staff to develop.

Children expressed some concerns about sleeping accommodation. Mattresses are not long enough for some tall boarders. Although some have been replaced, a number of mattresses are uncomfortable. Curtains are old and allow the light in. Children highlighted a number of other maintenance concerns, but these were addressed during the inspection.

The provision of meals should reflect more fully the children's own dietary needs and cultural habits. In particular, children complained that mealtimes are too early and there is a long time between some meals, such as brunch and tea on a Sunday and tea and breakfast the next day. There is not enough variety of food within the boarding house kitchen or on the menu. Children do not have a suppertime but can help themselves to food. Staff do not sit with children for meals and therefore do not monitor how well children eat. This is also a missed opportunity for children and staff to benefit from the social aspects of dining.

Leaders and managers have responded quickly to the identified shortfalls within this inspection. They have made some changes and are in the process of creating an action plan for future improvement.

There is a good response to complaints and incidents. Records of external complaints are appropriately maintained, with evidence of governor overview. Leaders make good use of complaints and feedback to improve experiences for children. The recent establishment of a student committee is a positive step towards ensuring that children's voices are heard and that they contribute to the life of the boarding house. However, complaints from children are not captured centrally, making it difficult to track patterns and trends.

Boarding staff are now included in the whole school training programme, which keeps them up to date with new developments and changes to policy. Training about attachment was provided to support staff to better understand and manage children's behavioural needs.

The relationships between parents, children and staff are good. The head of boarding ensures that information is shared so that parents are closely involved in decisions about their children. This helps to support staff in implementing the rules.

The head of boarding has been instrumental in improving the links between school

and boarding. A review of priorities by the leaders and governors evidences the positive impact for children of this greater integration, with a stronger focus on academic progress.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC060705

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mr Simon Porter

Type of school: boarding school

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Inspectors

Joanne Vyas: social care inspector

Caroline Walsh: Her Majesty's Inspector

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