

Sexeys School

Somerset County Council

Sexeys School, Cole Road, Bruton, Somerset BA10 0DF

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

Sexeys School is a maintained, mixed gender, boarding school in Bruton, Somerset for boarders aged 11 to 18 years. The school admits pupils from all over the United Kingdom and has a small number of pupils from overseas. It offers both day and termly boarding places. The boarding accommodation is provided in three houses, all of which are located on the school site. The school has the capacity for accommodating 261 boarders. At the time of this inspection, there were 184 boarders.

Inspection dates: 6 to 8 March 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

requires improvement to be good

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: inadequate

Date of last inspection: 12 October 2016

Key findings from this inspection

This boarding school requires improvement to be good because:

- In October 2016, Ofsted judged the boarding provision as inadequate. Since that inspection, progress to meet the failed national minimum standards has been slow. In response, the governing body and chief executive officer took action by making a number of changes to the leadership team.
- In October 2017, a new interim headteacher was appointed, and in January 2018, a new head of care was recruited. In the short time since their appointments, they have compiled a comprehensive action plan and have taken strong action to address 11 out of the 14 national minimum standards that were not met at the previous inspection. Much of their development and improvement work remains in its infancy and needs time to embed into practice.
- In recent months, the senior leaders' monitoring of records and the quality of care has improved. However, this work is not yet of a consistently adequate quality. During this inspection, weaknesses were identified in child protection records, the management of medication, records of complaints and staff supervision. These weaknesses have not impacted on the safety and well-being of boarders, but have the potential to do so.
- The head of care has recently introduced placement plans and risk assessments for children who need them. These plans are in the early stages of development, and currently they provide limited information. This means that new boarding staff are not provided with the appropriate guidance about how to manage, mitigate and respond to boarder's complex needs or high-risk behaviours.
- Further work is required to improve the management of medication. Healthcare professionals have not ensured that risk assessments are in place for those children who self-administer medication. In addition, homely remedies that are stored and dispensed in the boarding houses are not kept in their original packets with pharmaceutical guidelines.
- Not all national minimum standards are met, and additional areas for improvement were identified as a result of this inspection.

The boarding school's strengths:

- The senior leadership team demonstrates determination to improve the quality of care provided to boarders. Senior leaders have embraced advice from professionals and have visited other establishments to learn from them.
- The boarding staff demonstrate enthusiasm to apply the changes that the current leadership team is implementing. Support provided to staff is helping to guide them to fulfil their roles and responsibilities effectively.
- Boarders said that they enjoy their boarding experience and that they feel listened to and safe.

- Boarders are provided with a good range of extra-curricular activities at school and within the local community. Children are encouraged to pursue their personal interests and talents.

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 standard(s) for boarding 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. (National Minimum Standard 3.4)
- 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. (National Minimum Standard 11.1)
- The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate. (National Minimum Standard 13.8)
- 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. (National Minimum Standard 15.1)
- The school has, and follows, an appropriate policy on recording and responding to complaints that is compliant with the relevant regulatory standards. (National Minimum Standard 18.1)

Inspection judgements

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

Since the previous inspection, 17 new boarding staff have been recruited and appointed. During this period of change, boarders have not been provided with continuity and consistency of care.

Boarding care plans have been introduced for all boarders. In addition, those boarders with complex needs have also had risk assessments devised. These documents are in the early stages of development. Several documents had some sections with no information recorded. Not all risk assessments consistently provide boarding staff with clear guidance on how to identify, mitigate and manage risks.

Opportunities for some boarders to maintain contact with their families are problematic. This is because the school's internet filtering systems prevent boarders from accessing a number of social media sites. This is a particular concern for boarders whose families live overseas and who would typically use social media to keep in contact. The senior leadership team has agreed to review the current internet restrictions.

Boarders who spoke to the inspectors stated that they feel safe at the school and they feel well cared for, especially when they are not feeling well or when they are homesick. They confirmed that bullying has been an issue, but they are confident that the boarding staff manage any incidents well. Records indicate that bullying has reduced. Boarders said that the 'buddy system' works well in helping them to make friends.

Overall, the boarding houses are well maintained and well resourced. Boarders are able to individualise their sleeping areas. Boarders presented as happy in their environment and with their peers. All boarders spoken with could identify their career ambitions and knew how they would achieve them.

New boarders receive sufficient information and have opportunities to visit the boarding house prior to boarding at the school. The newly appointed head of care has identified in his action plan further development opportunities that will help boarders to adjust and settle into boarding life.

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

Senior leaders' oversight of safeguarding concerns has improved. Senior leaders have established relationships with a wide range of safeguarding agencies. These agencies confirmed that the school consults regularly with them and refers concerns as necessary. A new recording and reporting system has been introduced which has enabled the senior leadership team to monitor patterns and trends of behavioural incidents more effectively. However, records pertaining to safeguarding matters require improvement. Not all records provide clear and concise information and not all files contain minutes of strategy meetings or investigations undertaken. As a result, it is not always clear what action has been taken, by whom and the outcome.

A new electronic recording system has improved the communication between the school and boarding staff. Staff spoke positively about this new system. They stated that they feel better informed about safeguarding concerns, behavioural incidents

and complaints. Information recorded in these records is reviewed routinely at the weekly leadership meetings and during governor visits.

Although, overall, the management of medication has improved since the previous inspection, weaknesses still remain. Risk assessments have not been introduced for those boarders who self-administer medication. In addition, homely remedies that are stored and dispensed from the boarding houses are not kept in their original packets with pharmaceutical guidelines.

The quality of relationships between boarders has improved because leaders assess their suitability to share dormitories and boarders can suggest who they would like to share with. Incidents of bullying have reduced as a result. Physical intervention and police intervention have not been used to manage boarders' behaviour. Sanctions given for unwanted behaviour have been identified by the head of care as not effective or restorative. Appropriate action has been taken in response.

There has been a drive to improve the quality of safe care that boarders receive. New training opportunities have enhanced the boarding staff's knowledge and skills, which has started to improve their practice. Boarding staff spoke positively about the training opportunities they have been provided with, and they said their increased awareness and knowledge have improved as a result. In addition, senior staff have received safeguarding training at an enhanced level, and an increased number of staff have been trained in the school's chosen therapeutic intervention.

Improved systems are now in place for boarders to share concerns and complaints. Boarders confirmed that their concerns and complaints are acknowledged and responded to well. Despite this, records of the actions taken in response, investigations completed and outcomes are not well maintained and require improvement.

Senior leaders and managers have strengthened the recruitment procedures. All new staff, volunteers and visiting adults are subjected to safer recruitment checks before being permitted to work at the school.

Boarders, staff and visitors are kept safe by the staff team's good management of health and safety. Fire evacuation procedures have been reviewed and changes implemented. Effective action has been taken to improve safety around the whole site. This includes colour-coded lanyards, keypad locks on boarding houses, increased signage and locks on gates that can be accessed by the public. Robust monitoring of equipment, and checks of the grounds and accommodation, ensure that boarders are living in a safer environment.

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

In October 2016, the boarding provision was judged by Ofsted as inadequate. Insufficient action was taken immediately following the full inspection. In response, the governing body and chief executive officer have appointed a temporary headteacher who has recruited a new head of care. Since their appointment, a new action plan has been devised. This is a comprehensive plan, detailing what actions they are proposing to take to address the previously unmet minimum standards.

The newly appointed head of care has the required skills, experience and determination to eradicate entrenched poor cultural practices and strengthen safeguarding procedures. He has a clear focus on how to safeguard boarders and improve their experiences and opportunities. The head of care has worked hard to stabilise, support and develop the skills of those boarding staff who provide direct care for the boarders. Within a short space of time he has compiled an extensive boarding development plan. Timescales identified on the plan are realistic and achievable.

The governance of the school has improved. All governors have received training that has enhanced their knowledge and understanding of safeguarding concerns. Governors are working closely with the senior leadership team and have a clearer understanding of the school's operation. They visit the boarding provision, spend time with boarders and staff and review any reported concerns.

Senior leaders have reviewed the training needs of the boarding staff to ensure that the boarders' needs are supported, monitored and managed. Poor performance is managed well. Those boarding staff spoken to confirm that since the appointment of the new head of care they have felt valued, supported and integral to the school operation. In addition, most boarding staff have received formal supervision. Despite this, further improvement is required to ensure that all boarding staff are provided with meaningful supervision that enables them to reflect on their practice and discuss the boarders' progress, achievements and any concerns.

At this inspection, inspectors identified continued weaknesses in the records relating to boarders, the management of medication, care planning, risk assessments, complaints and the quality of supervision.

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: SC039847

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Position vacant

Type of school: Boarding school

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Inspector(s)

Mrs Sharron Escott: social care inspector

Mr David Kidner: social care inspector

Mrs Janice Hawtin: social care inspector



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