

Gloucestershire International School

Wootton House, Horton Road, Gloucester GL1 3PT

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

Gloucestershire International School is a small independent flexi-boarding and day school. The school caters for children aged 11 to 16 years from the local area and welcomes children who live further away and from overseas. The proprietors are involved in the daily operation of the school and one proprietor is the school principal. At the time of the inspection, there were 25 children on roll and two boarders. The boarding provision has the potential to accommodate up to 40 children. The length of stay can vary from one night to a full term. The school is located in the city of Gloucester.

The school opened in September 2016, and the education provision was first inspected by Ofsted on 30 November 2017. This is the first inspection of the boarding provision.

Inspection dates: 13 to 15 March 2018

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **inadequate**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

There are serious and widespread failures, which mean that children are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded and the care and experiences of children are poor.

Overall judgement at last inspection: This is the school's first social care inspection

Date of last inspection: N/A

Key findings from this inspection

This boarding school is inadequate because:

- The proprietors commenced the boarding provision without ensuring that there are suitable staffing arrangements and without clear policies and procedures as required by the national minimum standards for boarding schools.
- The lack of suitability checks on adults who work, volunteer, or live at the school places boarders at risk. Failings in staff recruitment checks were reported at a previous Ofsted inspection of the school. The proprietors have been slow to take sufficient action in this important area of safeguarding children.
- The proprietors fail to adhere to the school's health and safety policy. Safety checks in relation to electrical safety, gas safety and the testing of portable appliances have not been undertaken within the required timescales. Fire detection equipment has not been tested at the frequency required and boarders have yet to practice an evacuation during boarding time.
- Boarding staff are inadequate in number and lack the experience required to operate a boarding school. Boarding staff do not receive formal support or supervision, and the training they receive is minimal. Volunteers working in the school kitchen have not received any training in food safety.

The boarding school's strengths:

- The designated person for safeguarding is suitably trained and takes swift, appropriate action to escalate any concerns to the local authority and other agencies. All staff and volunteers have completed an online training course in safeguarding children.

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:

- There is an appropriate process of induction and guidance for new boarders. (National minimum standard 2.1)
- The school ensures compliance with relevant health and safety laws by drawing up and implementing effectively a written health and safety policy. (National minimum standard 6.1)
- The school premises, accommodation and facilities provided therein are

maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured. (National minimum standard 6.2)

- The school ensures that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy and appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified. (National minimum standard 6.3)
- The school complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. (National minimum standard 7.1)
- In addition, fire drills are regularly (at least once per term) carried out in 'boarding time'. (National minimum standard 7.2)
- Suitable accommodation is provided for the hygienic preparation, serving and consumption of boarders' main meals. This may be situated in the main school provided it is adjacent to or reasonably accessible from the boarding accommodation. (National minimum standard 8.2)
- In addition to main meals, boarders have access to drinking water and to food or the means of hygienically preparing food at reasonable times. Schools are sensitive to boarders' individual needs in this respect. (National minimum standard 8.3)
- There is an appropriate range and choice of activities for boarders outside teaching time, including sufficient and suitably timed free time each day. Suitable risk assessments are in place for any activities which may put boarders at risk of harm. (National minimum standard 10.1)
- 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. (National minimum standard 13.1)
- There is clear leadership and management of the practice and development of boarding in the school, and effective links are made between academic and residential staff. (National minimum standard 13.2)
- The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met. (National minimum standard 13.4)
- The school's leadership and management and governance actively promote the well-being of pupils. (National minimum standard 13.5)
- Senior boarding staff have an adequate level of experience and/or training. (National minimum standard 13.6)
- The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate. (National minimum standard 13.8)
- 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. (National minimum standard 14.1)

- For all persons over 16 (not on the roll of the school) who after April 2002 began to live on the same premises as boarders but are not employed by the school, an enhanced certificate with a barred list information must be obtained from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). (National minimum standard 14.2)
- All persons visiting boarding accommodation (e.g. visitors, outside delivery and maintenance personnel) are kept under sufficient staff supervision to prevent them gaining substantial unsupervised access to boarders or their accommodation. (National minimum standard 14.4)
- 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 staff supervising boarders outside teaching time are sufficient in number, training and experience for the age, number and needs of boarders, and the locations and activities involved. (National minimum standard 15.3)
- Boarders are at all times under the responsibility of an identified member of staff who is suitably qualified and experienced. (National minimum standard 15.4)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

As a result of widespread failures and safeguarding concerns, boarders are not provided with a range of positive experiences.

New boarders do not receive an induction or written guidance to the boarding provision. The lack of structure and planning results in ad-hoc arrangements relating to menu planning and purposeful activities.

The proprietors have failed to employ staff with suitable experience in boarding matters. They have appointed a volunteer member of staff to take responsibility as a house master. Boarding staff regularly work alone with the current low number of boarders. The safety, and the health and well-being, of boarders and staff are compromised without lone-working guidance and risk assessment. These documents are referred to in the school's health and safety policy, however the proprietors have not issued them.

Boarders' health and welfare needs are not met. Significant information about a boarder's health condition, medication and known safeguarding concerns were not passed to the house master who acts as the primary carer during boarding time. This potentially places the boarder at risk of harm. In addition, the proprietors fail to provide the house master with ready access to contact details for parents of boarders.

The proprietors opened the boarding provision at this school without any member of resident staff being suitably trained in emergency first aid. This was rectified within three weeks. However, following the training, staff reported that many of the contents of the first aid kit were out of date. At the time of the inspection, a list of required items to replenish the first aid kits across the school was in the process of being collated to purchase new stock.

The boarding accommodation is on the ground floor and two upper floors of the main school building. Low numbers mean that currently only the first floor is in use for boarders' single bedrooms. These are located near to the resident house master. Boarders like their rooms and said that they have all that they need. Volunteers and some school staff are resident in other areas of the school. A key fob system is designed to restrict access to the boarding area. However, the inspectors observed volunteers breaching this safety measure by entering the boarding area near to boarders' bedrooms.

The bathroom is suitable, with shower cubicles providing privacy. Hazardous cleaning materials are not always stored appropriately, for example a large container of bleach was observed in an unlocked cupboard. The boarding staff removed this once it was reported by inspectors.

Additional concerns for the health and safety of boarders were found in the boarding kitchen area. Electrical appliances such as a microwave, hot plate and mini oven have not been subject to portable appliance testing. These appliances were dirty and some had signs of rust, both hazards posing a risk to boarders' health and safety.

In the main school kitchen, volunteers support the chef in preparing meals and snacks. The volunteers do not have any training in food safety, and the school chef is the only member of staff suitably qualified. Without this training, the involvement of the volunteers in preparing food poses a risk to the health of boarders and others who eat at the school.

A lounge and common room provide boarders with access to a games console, a television, board games and a pool table. Boarders were observed to enjoy these activities after school and are considering what additional activities they would like to do, particularly as the lighter evenings approach. Currently, the activities are led by boarders, without any planning from boarding staff. This arrangement is not sustainable as the numbers of boarders increase.

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

Boarders are at risk of harm as a result of the widespread failures to help and protect them.

Serious failings in the recruitment and vetting of staff and volunteers compromise the safety of boarders. Staff who are responsible for the recruitment of staff and volunteers do not follow the school's safer recruitment policy and fail to follow the statutory guidance 'Keeping children safe in education (2016)'.

The recruitment process is not sufficiently robust, and there is a lack of scrutiny in considering whether staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children. The proprietors have failed to ensure that full background checks are completed on staff and volunteers. In particular, they have failed to seek references from previous employers and to establish full employment histories. The failure to adopt safer recruitment practices was reported at an Ofsted education inspection in November 2017, and the proprietors have made minimal progress to rectify these safeguarding concerns. For example, not all staff have two satisfactory references and the single central record does not contain all of the required information.

The proprietors do not use risk assessments effectively to protect boarders. Rooms and buildings on the school premises are rented out to commercial businesses and contractors. Adults living on the same premises as boarders, but who are not employed by the school, are required to be subject to an enhanced DBS check. The proprietors have failed to obtain these checks for all the adults living on the premises. The proprietors fail to consider the risks that visiting, and resident, adults may pose to boarders.

Access to the boarding accommodation involves walking through a school corridor where members of the public wait to access a private tutorial business. The proprietors have failed to provide an alternative entrance to the boarding area that would reduce this risk, despite this suggestion being made at a previous inspection.

The proprietors fail to adhere to the school's health and safety policy. They do not ensure that the boarding environment is compliant with health and safety requirements. Portable appliances have not been tested to ensure that they are safe to use. Gas and electrical safety certificates are out of date. The proprietors report that these certificates will be available on completion of the maintenance work of the boilers, scheduled for the school holidays in March and April 2018.

Inadequate fire safety measures place boarders, staff and volunteers at risk. The fire risk assessment does not reflect the current practice. Boarders have not experienced a practice evacuation, during boarding time, in the event that the fire alarm is activated. Boarding and maintenance staff, and the proprietors, are unaware that such a fire drill is a requirement at least once per term. Records confirm that the fire detection systems are not routinely tested. Weekly tests of the call points ceased for

three months during November 2017 to February 2018. Similarly, the records of visits by an external contractor to test and maintain the fire detection system do not confirm that visits occur every three months as reported by the proprietors. The last entry in the log book is for August 2017, seven months ago.

The safety of boarders is compromised due to insufficient staffing within the boarding provision. For example, due to the lack of alternative boarding staff, when the house master left the school premises on two occasions to undertake private employment, the boarders had to accompany him. This inappropriate action occurred without risk assessment, without adequate car insurance and failed to meet the needs of the boarders. The proprietors failed to question this arrangement and ensure that the boarders were safe.

The designated person for safeguarding at this school has completed multi-agency training and, to assist her in this new role, she receives support from a local school's safeguarding lead person. All staff and volunteers have undertaken online training to raise their awareness of safeguarding children. The designated person maintains comprehensive safeguarding records and a chronology of any concerns. Such records confirm that suitable reporting occurs to other agencies and that concerns for children are escalated swiftly, and appropriately, to the local authority.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The proprietors fail to monitor the boarding provision to identify when national minimum standards are not met. The boarding provision lacks any governance or oversight from adults other than the proprietors. The principal is recruiting an advisory board with the intention for such a body to monitor the leadership and management of the school. The first advisory board meeting was scheduled for the last week in March 2018, after this inspection.

Many school policies and procedures do not reflect the current practice within the school. The proprietors do not ensure that staff, or that they themselves, adhere to school policies such as the health and safety policy, and the safer recruitment policy. The failings in recruitment practices were identified during the education inspection in November 2017.

Leaders and managers have not demonstrated sufficient urgency in addressing areas that require improvement. In response to the failings reported at the Ofsted education inspection, the proprietors submitted an action plan to the Department for Education. This inspection found continued deficiencies in recruitment, risk assessment and health and safety and, consequently, there is a very high risk that many aspects of the action plan will not be met by the target date of 1 April 2018.

Resident staff and volunteers are required to sign a safeguarding agreement about their live-in arrangements. The inspectors viewed three documents that were signed on the day of the inspection, up to two weeks after these resident volunteers moved in. Similarly, the unchecked contractors living on the premises signed a code of

conduct on the final day of this inspection, having lived on site for two months. Staff and volunteers confirmed that the inspection had prompted the proprietors to request that key documents are signed and that new documents have been distributed.

The house master has not received any induction to his role. He has not received any supervision from the proprietors, nor any specific training on managing a boarding provision. Minimal training has occurred for the house master in safeguarding and first aid.

The proprietors lack clarity on the future of boarding at this school and do not have a written development plan. The principal is considering ways to extend the boarding provision by inviting children from overseas. Currently, the proprietors fail to identify the weaknesses and, consequently, do not have effective action plans to make the improvements required to the current boarding provision.

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: 1244175

Principal: Dr Daniel Sturdy

Type of school: Boarding school

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Inspectors

Clare Davies: social care inspector (lead)
Paula Lahey: regulatory inspection manager



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