



Report on a review of
BOARDING FACILITIES
at
SHAFTESBURY SCHOOL

by

DALE WILKINS

BSA DIRECTOR OF SAFEGUARDING,
STANDARDS AND TRAINING

16TH DECEMBER 2019

I visited the school's boarding house at Barton Hill House on Monday 16th December 2019. Although it was not possible to visit all the facilities, as some of the boarders were not well, the visit comprised the following components:

- Governance and Compliance meeting with a Governor
- Meeting and review of documentation with Head and Deputy Head of Boarding and Day House Manager
- Review of Medical facilities
- Meeting with Headteacher
- Meeting with KS£ and KS4 boarders
- Meeting with Sixth Form boarders
- Tour of accommodation

The review of documentation included:

- Complaints file
- Student welfare plans
- Compliance logs (fire etc)
- Behaviour records
- Improvement plan

There was also a discussion of safeguarding practice and procedures.

Governance and Compliance

The meeting with Chris Brickell, Chair of Trustees, indicated that he takes an active part on monitoring the provision of the house and holding the boarding team to account. There is a clear commitment to compliance and improving on outcomes against the NMS. He believes that the Head and Deputy Head of Boarding have an ambitious vision for the facility, and are focused and well-organised in their commitment to boarding improvement. The school is entering a time of change, and is about to merge with a larger Trust, so the role of the Chair will be vital in continuing to ensure that there is proper scrutiny of boarding.

The Chair of Trustees visits the boarding house for an audit visit at least once a term. And is aware of current weaknesses and plans to address them. The visits include meeting with boarders, often having dinner with them, and always ascertain as much as possible about the boarders' experience. His audits indicate that the boarders feel safe in the house, and their primary concerns are matters such as the wi-fi which, although problematic, is fully compliant with the requirements of NMS 4.

There is a formal boarding meeting once a term with the Head and the Finance and Business Manager, which formally reviews safeguarding as well as recruitment and retention. There is an independent audit of the SCR. Staff are made aware of whistleblowing procedures, and this was independently verified later in the day during discussions with boarding staff. However to date there have been no cases of boarding staff needing to use the procedure. There is some concern about the value for money from the current catering arrangements, however the safeguarding knowledge of the catering and domestic staff was very good. When I met them later, they all knew the relevant procedures and said that they would be prepared to act if necessary.

The general oversight of procedures by the Trustees through the Chair is very good, with my two development points as follows:

- Every effort must be made to ensure similarly robust procedures are continued under the new Trust arrangements soon to be implemented
- It would be beneficial to conduct a formal review of the three action points from the previous Ofsted report so that Trustees can be confident that these have been fully actioned.

Medical facilities

Although this was not a full review of medical provision, I was shown the facilities, and was able to discuss the relevant procedures. Staff and pupils were well aware of the procedures for being able to self-medicate. Staff have received appropriate training to dispense medication and there was an efficient procedure for regular checking on boarders who were not well and being allowed to rest in the House. This procedure was in place at the time of my visit. Although no individual files or records were scrutinised, the procedures as seen and described seem to be fully compliant with the requirements of NMS 3. In particular requirements around controlled drugs are in line with expectations, with the medication being double-locked, and there being a procedure of double-signing. Stock control procedures are also sufficient to ensure that there is good oversight of medication. There is also good communication between House and school so that staff in both areas are aware of anything which has been dispensed.

Records, documentation and communication

A discussion of safeguarding procedures indicated that practice was generally consistent with current best practice. However I would recommend the following actions:

- Ensure that all aspects of the actions undertaken are reflected in the chronology
- Ensure that outcomes are specifically referenced in each case
- Conduct an audit of the files to ensure full compliance, and tie this in with some sample case-tracking in accordance with Ofsted procedures as outlined in the SCCIF.

The diary is an effective way of communicating between colleagues, and this was particularly mentioned by the staff group when discussing handovers etc. However, the section in the diary which references rewards and sanctions seems to concentrate solely on sanctions. Staff should discuss the purpose of this section and make any necessary adjustments.

The handover meetings are an effective way of ensuring that all staff are aware of the relevant issues relating to the boarders. These cover illnesses, concerns and worries and any other relevant information about the boarders. Staff reported that the flow of information was good, and that there was a regular boarding update on a Wednesday at which the needs of the boarders were specifically addressed.

Supervision procedures in line with the expectations of the SCCIF are clearly defined, and focus appropriately on reflective practice and the outcomes for boarders. The Head of Boarding also undertakes peer-support with a HoB in a different school.

Reporting systems around maintenance and other issues are good, and the accommodation reports forms seem to be effective in practice.

The complaints forms are good and used effectively, although it would be beneficial if the outcome of the complaint could be tracked further, and with a clear indication of the evidence on which the findings are based.

Assessment of current provision against the NMS

1	I asked boarders to describe what they thought the aims of boarding were, and they replied that the key factors were responsibility, independence, and preparation for life. They quoted as an example the way Sixth Form pupils are expected, but supported, to do their own laundry. This is in line with the Mission Statement for boarding as highlighted by the school, and my discussions with boarders indicated that they also displayed respect and tolerance, and that the House focused appropriately on progress and achievement
2	Pupils confirmed that they had a variety of people they would go to for support, and these included boarding staff and also staff in the main body of the school through mentor sessions and the like. There was a new independent listener, of which the boarders were aware, and the number was appropriately displayed. Boarders were positive about induction, and this is supported both by the quality of the information available online and by the activities for new boarders to help them integrate. The House collects feedback relating to the induction experience, which is then used to refine provision in future years.
3	Pupils were very comfortable with the procedures to be followed when they were ill, and those who had experience of the system were able to talk positively about it. The pupil views accurately reflected my observations and the information I had been given by staff.
4	As anticipated from my conversation with the Head of Trustees, there was considerable concern from the boarders about the wi-fi, indicating that it blocked a lot of things. There were also occasional connection issues. Boarders were particularly concerned about WhatsApp being blocked, but this is entirely consistent with the company's own policy of restricting access to Under 16s, so this is appropriate. There were no issues expressed about the ability of boarders to contact home. This area seems compliant with the relevant requirements of the NMS, however, although staff will need to remain mindful of the boarders' concerns in this area. Procedures for allowing pupils to use their own mobile phones, and for collecting them in overnight in Year 9 and below, are proportionate, and in line with similar procedures in other schools.
5	The accommodation that I was able to visit was certainly light, warm, well-ventilated and comfortable in line with the requirements of the NMS. Boarders reported that the beds were comfortable, although some taller Sixth Formers found them a bit short, although this is not an uncommon complaint! One or two boarders thought that the mattresses needed improvement. Sixth Form pupils also expressed some concerns about the hot water, which seemed to sometimes be very hot or not hot at all. Boarders reported that maintenance matters were generally dealt with swiftly. The common room areas were also of a good standard, and boarders reported that they were well used. There are appropriate systems and controls in place to ensure that boarders only access those areas of the buildings to which they were entitled, and the Sixth Form particularly like the benefit of the separate Sixth Form Common room.
6	I identified no issues relating to health and safety during my visit, and the boarders reported that they feel safe in the house. Indeed they said that it would be hard to get out without staff knowing, as the doors were alarmed. I was also able to discuss the wider risk-assessment procedures with both boarding and site staff. Risk assessments are generally conducted online, so there was limited opportunity to scrutinise in detail but the procedures as outlined are appropriate, particularly in relation to the programme of trips and visits. Site staff confirmed that those driving

	minibuses have taken the appropriate local authority test and are thus authorised to drive.
7	Record keeping, equipment testing records and procedures were all in line with regulatory requirements. Staff confirmed that some have received Fire Marshall training, and the boarders all confirmed that they were aware of evacuation procedures, and that these had been frequently tested.
8	There were mixed views from the boarders about the food, although the menus seem good, and the general standard seems compliant with the NMS. Boarders reported that the breakfast was generally good, as was lunch, but that there were concerns about the evening meal, although this has improved recently. They were also not particularly keen on Sunday lunch. Staff and also the Trustee were aware of boarders' feelings about the food, and steps were being taken to address them. This is an area which will require further monitoring, however.
9	Laundry provision is good, with boarders in the Sixth Form able to do their own laundry, Boarders reported that clothing occasionally got lost, but it was not clear if this was because of the system or because of the items not being named. Boarders reported that they had sufficient space to store their belongings. There is also a pocket money system in place which is made known to boarders.
10	The range of activities is good, and the facilities boarders can access both inside the house and elsewhere in the school are appropriate for their needs. There is a good range of trips and activities at weekends, which is responsive to different needs. Boarders were generally appreciative of the provision, although some younger boarders would like to be allowed out more often, or after Dinner. This notwithstanding, current procedures are robust and more than sufficient for their needs.
11	Although this was not a formal safeguarding review, discussions of individual cases, and reviews of the relevant documentation indicate that procedures are in line with good practice. Some minor improvement recommendations are indicated below.
12	Sanction systems are clear and well understood by the boarders. The level of reporting is certainly appropriately although further work could perhaps be done to ensure the thresholds for giving "early bed" are consistent. The spreadsheets on which this and other sanctions information is kept allow staff to become aware of any trends and patterns with particularly bed. Boarders generally felt that sanctions were given out fairly, although some felt that it was a bit of a rush to get showered in time when sharing a room of 4 (others disagreed). Boarders reported positive relationships between boys and girls and across different year groups. I was able to witness very positive relationships between Sixth Form and younger pupils. Relationships between pupils and staff were generally good, and they also got on well with the kitchen staff. There was no bullying of which the boarders were aware. Procedures for linking between boarding and academic provision are good, and boarding staff are knowledgeable about the academic progress of the boarders.
13	All evidence indicates that boarding is well led and managed, and fully integrated within the reporting and monitoring structures within the wider school and the Trust. As indicated elsewhere, there are some small areas for improvement, but staff knowledge of boarding procedures and consistency within boarding management structures are very good.
14	This was not intended to be a review of HR procedures, but I saw nothing of any concern with relation to staff recruitment and checks on other adults. Indeed, the recruitment of staff has been successful in that the team is cohesive and works collaboratively and effectively.

15	Boarders reported that they know how to contact staff and that staff know how to contact them by accessing their mobile phone numbers. This procedure is clearly defined, is not used for any other purpose and the boarders are comfortable with it. Boarders reported that when staff are performing duties they respect boarders' privacy appropriately and consistently.
16	Boarders reported very positively about equal opportunities, and I saw no examples of any discriminatory behaviour. Cultural and linguistic differences were celebrated, and indeed the boarders reported that the mix of the boarding community was one of its strengths.
17	Boarders commented on their access to surveys which they could complete, a suggestion box and the fact that they could make comments on their "mentor sheets". However, by far the most popular method for feeding back was by telling the staff face-to-face. Evidence relating to the improved food provision indicates that boarders are listened to, and that staff act on their views where possible.
18	Again, boarders reported that they would normally go to the office if they had a complaint and would speak directly to staff, particularly the Head of Boarding. They knew that they could also follow up complaints via the suggestion box, or the complaints form, and that this could be anonymous if necessary.
19/20	Standards 19 and 20 do not apply

Overall boarder feedback

In general terms, boarders fed back very positively. When asked what they would change if they could, they found it difficult to think of something, but eventually came up with the computers (too old and slow), the time Year 10 could stay out until, bed time in Year 9 and having to be back for Sunday lunch. They were far more spontaneous when considering the best aspects of boarding, and mentioned the trips, the ethnic mix, the support structures and the fact that boarding was a home away from home, where they learned to be more independent.

Overall findings

I have no significant concerns about the boarding provision, and consider it to be well run. The boarders are safe, feel safe and are well looked after, with good provision in the house and beyond. They have appropriate systems for being able to report concerns and complaints and generally consider that they are dealt with fairly, and well supported by staff and by each other. Staff management and recording systems are very strong, with a particular strength in the area of reflective supervision for boarding staff. There is also good awareness and scrutiny by senior staff and by the Trust. In that context the following recommendations for further improvement are made:

- Ensure that all actions relating to the previous Ofsted inspection have been made and fully reported to management and Trust, these being:
 - Ensure that all recording is evaluative and signed and dated by the author.
 - Ensure that all staff receive adequate levels of formal supervision and training in line with the boarding house policy.
 - Ensure that boys' bedrooms are refurbished to ensure that there is consistency across the boarding house.
- Ensure that the new Trust has similarly robust procedures in place for monitoring boarding provision
- Consider the following refinements of the current safeguarding procedures:

- Ensure that all aspects of the actions undertaken during safeguarding procedures are reflected in the chronology
- Ensure that outcomes are specifically referenced in each case
- Conduct an audit of the files to ensure full compliance, and tie this in with some sample case-tracking in accordance with Ofsted procedures as outlined in the SCCIF.
- Consider improving the use of the rewards and sanctions section of the diary
- Be clearer about outcomes for the complainant and any other parties on the complaints forms
- Continue to monitor improvements to food, especially in the evenings and at weekends

Dale Wilkins

February 20th, 2020