

North Hill House

Fromefield, Frome, Somerset BA11 2HB

Inspection date

15 June 2023

Overall outcome

The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Residential provision outcome

The school does not meet all of the national minimum standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a)–(b)

- At the time of the previous inspection in September 2022, safeguarding arrangements were found to be effective. However, it was reported that the proprietor and leaders' oversight of record-keeping and operations of the school could be sharper. Since that time a new headteacher and designated safeguarding lead have been appointed. They have amended the school's systems and processes for recording and reporting safeguarding concerns. Nonetheless, this work is in its infancy and has not been implemented consistently.
- School leaders do not ensure staff's safeguarding training is up to date. They do not regularly check training records to assure themselves that staff have the necessary knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities to safeguard pupils in their care. For example, the education staff's refresher safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training is not up to date.
- Safeguarding records are incomplete. Important information, including leaders' plans, actions and outcomes, is missing from pupils' records. Appropriate safeguarding action plans are not developed by leaders quickly enough. Staff sometimes do not have sight of these plans.
- Leaders do not have an accurate oversight of behaviour incidents. Behaviour incidents are not analysed, for example when staff restrain pupils or for how long. Not all education staff have completed up-to-date restraint training.
- Incomplete records and a lack of consistent monitoring of safeguarding procedures by leaders means staff frequently do not know what is in place to support vulnerable pupils and their families.
- Safeguarding investigations are carried out appropriately. However, school leaders do not

ensure outcomes are communicated to the local authority designated officer in a timely manner.

- This independent school standard (the standards) was met at the time of the last inspection but is now not met.

Paragraph 8, 8(a)–(b)

- Pupils' personalised plans and risk assessments are not consistent across care and education. This does not provide staff with clear guidance and support in caring for pupils.
- School leaders do not monitor the quality or effectiveness of pupils' individual risk assessments. Successful strategies used in the residential provision are not incorporated into education plans.
- A secure culture of safeguarding is not embedded in all aspects of the school's work.
- This standard remains unmet.

Paragraphs 11, 12, 14

- Leaders have a written health and safety policy. The proprietor body commission external audits to assure themselves that health and safety policies are implemented effectively. This includes the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- Throughout the school day, leaders ensure that pupils are appropriately supervised.
- These standards continue to be met.

Paragraph 16, 16(b)

- The proprietor body has ensured there is a suitable written risk assessment policy in place. However, leaders do not ensure there are appropriate personalised risk assessments for pupils in school.
- Individual pupil risk assessments are not regularly updated or monitored by leaders. This does not help staff to know what additional measures they should take to support and care for pupils in school.
- This standard was met at the time of the last inspection but is now not met.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(a)–(f), 18(3), 19(2), 19(2)(a)–(e), 19(3), (20)(6)(a)–(c), 21(1), 21(2), 21(3), 21(3)(a)–(b), 21(4), 21(5), 21(5)(a)–(c), 21(6), 21(7), 21(7)(a)–(b)

- Safer recruitment checks continue to be carried out following statutory guidance. The school's single central record of recruitment checks is compliant with the government's requirements.
- The standards in this part were met at the time of the last inspection and continue to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 22, 23(1), 23(1)(a)–(c), 24(1), 24(1)(a)–(c), 24(2), 25, 26, 27, 27(a)–(b), 28(1), 28(1)(a)–(d), 28(2), 28(2)(a)–(b), 29(1), 29(1)(a)–(b), 29(2), 30

- The proprietor body has maintained the standard of premises and accommodation at the school and residential accommodation facilities to ensure, so far as is reasonably

practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils.

- At the time of the inspection, additional teaching and learning spaces were being created at the school.
- The standards in this part were met at the time of the last inspection and continue to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(c)

- A written safeguarding and child protection policy is available on the school's website. However, at the time of the inspection, it contained out-of-date information. It stated the previous headteacher's name and contact details.
- The school's risk assessment policy was not published on the school's or Aspris Children's Services website. A paper copy was made available to the inspection team.
- This standard was met at the time of the last inspection but is now not met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a)–(c)

- There have been several changes within the senior leadership team in education since January 2023. Currently, leaders and managers do not have effective oversight of the school's systems and processes to safeguard pupils. Shortfalls have not been identified or rectified in a timely manner.
- Staff do not know how to report a complaint. The whistleblowing policy was not published on the Aspris Children's Services or North Hill House websites. As a result, Ofsted has received complaints about the effectiveness of leadership and management at the school. Staff report that when complaints are made, they are not informed when they are resolved. Outcomes are not consistently shared with staff. Therefore, opportunities for leaders and staff to learn from incidents, concerns and complaints are missed.
- On occasion, the words used in the school's behaviour chronologies are vague and emotive. There is no consistent evidence of conversations with the pupil involved. There is a lack of consistent oversight of these records by leaders.
- Expectations to promote the welfare of pupils are not the same in school and residential settings. Therefore, leaders have not demonstrated that they fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met consistently.
- This standard remains unmet.

The national minimum standards that were assessed during this inspection

Standard 5 – Records (NMS 5.2)

- The current systems for recording behaviour issues are ineffective and do not aid leaders and managers in monitoring these events. There are two places on the current system to record behaviour events. This has led to records not being consistently completed. For example, the description of some events does not state what restraint has been used. This requirement is stated clearly in Appendix B of the national minimum standards.

- This standard remains unmet

Standard 13 – Safeguarding (NMS 13.1)

- Social care leaders have undertaken work with their team to discuss the findings of a national report into abuse in residential settings. Leaders and staff have looked at how they can prevent such events from occurring in their residential setting. At the time of the inspection, this work with school staff had not started.
- Where a safeguarding concern is identified for a pupil, there is a lack of action taken to raise this with local authorities. Leaders do not ensure appropriate support outside of the school day and during school holidays is put in place swiftly. The management of causes for concern in the residential provision is well managed with effective follow-up actions. Nevertheless, there is a lack of oversight of safeguarding records by leaders. This means safeguarding arrangements across the school and residential provision are not consistent.
- This standard remains unmet.

Standard 14 – Safety of children (NMS 14.3)

- Outcomes of safeguarding investigations are not reflected in pupils' risk assessments or plans. This does not aid staff in the care of the pupil or the prevention of situations reoccurring.
- Risk assessments are overly long documents. This reduces the effectiveness of these as working documents.
- This standard remains unmet.

Compliance with regulatory requirements and national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school does not meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards'), the national minimum standards for residential special schools and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection, as set out in the annex of this report. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

School details

Unique reference number	131975
Social care unique reference number	033014
DfE registration number	933/6200
Inspection number	10293785

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The inspection of residential provision 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	Other independent special school
School status	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	6 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	54
Number of part-time pupils	0
Number of boarders on roll	6
Proprietor	Aspris Children's Services Ltd
Chair	John Anderson
Headteacher	Justin Davey
Annual fees (day pupils)	£67,000 to £87,000
Telephone number	01373 466222
Website	www.aspriscs.co.uk
Email address	northhillhouseschool@aspriscs.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	27 to 29 September 2022

Information about this school

- The previous standard inspection was in September 2022. At this time, the school was judged to be requires improvement.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.
- North Hill House is owned by Aspris Children's Services Ltd.
- The school is registered for 66 pupils with autism and associated conditions.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- There are no pupils attending the sixth form.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- Following the previous inspection, the registration authority required the proprietor body to produce an action plan. The school action plan was evaluated by Ofsted in March 2023.
- The proprietor body has submitted an application to operate a children's home separate from the school.
- The inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, head of care, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, designated safeguarding lead and regional school business manager. The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer (online) and the chair of governors/operations manager.
- The lead inspector spoke with Somerset County's local authority designated officer during the inspection.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including policies, recruitment checks, safety checks, risk assessments, external audits and other records maintained by school staff. The inspectors toured the school and residential sites to evaluate how well leaders and managers are ensuring that the health and safety standards are maintained.

The school's proposed change to the maximum number of pupils

The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **the school is unlikely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented.**
- The school is unlikely to meet the required standards for an increase in pupil numbers as the standards and national minimum standards for residential special schools remain unmet.

Inspection team

Marie Thomas, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Wendy Anderson

Social Care Regulatory Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

Standards that were not met at the previous inspection and remain un-met at this inspection

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 8 Where section 87(1) of the 1989 Act[11] applies in relation to a school the standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 8(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders while they are accommodated at the school; and
 - 8(b) such arrangements have regard to the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools or, where applicable, the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

National minimum standards for residential special schools

- Each child's file includes the information in Appendix B (individual records). (NMS 5.2)
- The school should ensure 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. (NMS 13.1)
- The school ensures that the welfare of children 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. (NMS 14.3)

Standards that were met at the previous inspection, but are now judged to not be met at this inspection

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 6. Provision of information

- 31(1) The standard about the provision of information by the school is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 31(1)(c) particulars of the arrangements for meeting the standard contained in paragraph 7 are published on the school's internet website or, where no such website exists, are provided to parents on request.

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