

# Ampleforth College

St Laurence Education Trust

Ampleforth College, York YO62 4ER

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## **Information about this boarding school**

Ampleforth College is a Roman Catholic co-educational boarding and day school, rooted in Benedictine values. The school is set in a rural location and has extensive grounds, which are used for pupils' activities. The school is on the same site as Ampleforth Abbey.

The school provides education for 456 pupils, from Year 7 to Year 13. Boys and girls attend the school in all year groups. The school began to admit pupils from Year 7 in September 2020. The numbers of children currently in Years 7 and 8 are lower than in other years.

The school has 368 pupils who board full time in nine boarding houses. In addition, all day pupils have bedrooms within boarding houses allocated to them. This allows ad-hoc boarding and enables day pupils to enjoy activities in the evenings and at weekends. Each boarding house has a house master or house mistress in day-to-day charge. A range of other staff care for pupils, including academic tutors and matrons. A member of the senior leadership team holds overall responsibility for the boarding provision.

The boarding provision of the school was inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate from September 2011 until September 2020.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

**Inspection dates: 30 November to 3 December 2021**

**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 failures, which mean that children and young people are not protected, or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded.

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate**

While there are some strengths in the boarding provision, pupils' overall experiences and progress are inadequate. This is because leaders and staff fail to take appropriate action to protect pupils from serious harm.

Most pupils enjoy boarding in this school. They have a sense of belonging to their individual boarding houses and to the wider school. Many pupils say that they feel they are part of a boarding family, and that they value the relationships that they develop with staff and other pupils. These relationships help pupils to feel secure about boarding at the school.

Pupils' social skills and confidence improve, due to their experience of boarding. Staff encourage older pupils to help those who are new to boarding. Pupils become increasingly independent as they get older. There is an emphasis on preparing pupils to be able to manage well when they move on to the next stage of their lives, including going to university. Older pupils report that they feel ready to move on, because of the ethos of the boarding provision.

Boarding houses that needed to be updated have been decorated. All boarding houses are now of an acceptable standard and pupils feel comfortable in their surroundings. They individualise their bedrooms, particularly as they get older. Younger pupils share bedrooms with up to four other pupils. Most of the time, these arrangements work well. When they do not, boarding staff move pupils, taking into account their views. As a result, most pupils are pleased with the boarding house in which they live.

Pupils take part in a wide range of activities. They describe the opportunities for different hobbies as being 'endless'. Many such activities are sporting in nature. However, pupils can also become involved in a variety of other pastimes, such as art, theatre craft and cooking. This means that all pupils have access to enjoyable activities that provide them with structure and routine outside of the school day. This is a strength of the boarding provision.

Pupils' educational needs are well supported by boarding staff. Academic tutors form part of the boarding staff team. They help pupils with their homework and preparation for the next day's lessons. Pupils value this support. As a result, their academic ability improves, which helps them to achieve their potential.

A large proportion of pupils, 37%, have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). An experienced special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) informs the help offered to these pupils in lessons. This means that teaching for these pupils is increasingly effective. However, boarding staff do not receive the same level of information and advice about these pupils' needs. This leaves some pupils being

cared for by staff who do not know how to understand and respond to their behaviour.

Pupils' health needs are met. Each house has a matron who oversees the physical and emotional well-being of pupils. The on-site infirmary is permanently staffed by qualified medical practitioners. Boarding staff take pupils for appointments further afield. Within the school, some pupils receive individualised support from counsellors and other staff based in the learning hub. The school has strong links with a local general practitioner and a psychiatrist, who offer regular appointments to pupils who need this input. The approach to meeting pupils' physical and mental health needs means that they receive the care they need.

Boarding staff provide support to pupils moving into and from the boarding houses. Staff try to allocate younger pupils to boarding houses which they have chosen after meeting with the house master or house mistress. This includes recognising the particular needs of pupils from overseas. Older pupils receive careers advice or encouragement with their applications to university. This means that pupils are content with the help they receive to feel settled and are prepared for the next stages of their lives.

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

Arrangements to safeguard vulnerable pupils are not effective. Staff do not understand that some pupils with SEND struggle to respond to the usual forms of support and guidance. This is a particular issue outside of the classroom. For example, some younger pupils, whose vulnerabilities include SEND, were able to engage in sexual activity, observed by another pupil, because levels of staff supervision were not sufficient to protect them.

The impact of safeguarding concerns is not consistently well evaluated. For example, safeguarding staff knew about several risk factors for the pupils involved in the above incident. Despite this, effective risk assessments were not prepared to reduce the likelihood of an incident occurring, or indeed reoccurring. The expertise of the SENCo was not used to inform plans for these vulnerable pupils. Boarding staff were not helped to understand the potential ramifications of poor levels of supervision. As a result, several pupils were directly affected by this serious incident and continue to be at risk because safeguarding staff do not understand the need for appropriate levels of supervision. Inspectors are concerned that other vulnerable pupils remain at risk.

Whistle-blowers, who are concerned that pupils are not safe, contacted Ofsted before and after the inspection, about the following serious safeguarding incident. Leaders investigated the incident immediately afterwards. On their last day of school, 81 Year 13 students left the boarding houses at night. They attended an unauthorised gathering they had planned to celebrate the end of the academic year. Ineffective staff supervision, combined with poor security checks on the boarding houses, meant that staff did not act to keep those pupils safe. As a result, one pupil was admitted to

hospital due to alcohol intoxication. Another pupil was missing for one hour after everyone else was back in their boarding houses. The pupil was found alone in an orchard, uncertain of how they had got there. At the same time, leaders located Class A drugs in the boarding house. Despite improving the boarding house security after this event, senior staff do not accept any failings on their part for the harm some pupils suffered.

Staff did not adequately supervise pupils during an organised event that took place at the on-site Windmill Café on the evening before Year 13 students last day of school. This led to at least one pupil drinking far more alcohol than is allowed. Assertions by staff that pupils are kept safe when drinking alcohol at the school cannot be relied upon.

There are no confirmed arrangements to safeguard pupils from monks who are a concern. Some younger pupils view monks as trusted adults. Staff have not done any effective work with these pupils to help militate against potential risks.

At the time of the last inspection, the headteacher had a veto which allowed him to insist on any monks of concern being removed from the abbey. Monks of concern would include those who have been accused of child sexual abuse, including any found guilty and any who are currently under investigation of child sexual abuse in the past and any who are under investigation currently. Leaders indicated that monks found guilty of child sexual abuse would be laicised and therefore could not reside at the Abbey. The terms of a draft information-sharing protocol required residing monks to be risk assessed and allowed the school to make representations about any proposal for a monk of concern to reside at the Abbey. However, at the time of this inspection, there was no such agreement in place, which limited the school's ability to ensure that no adults who may pose a potential safeguarding risk to children can gain access to the site.

The general behaviour of most pupils who board is good. Most pupils respond well to the expectations of staff, which means that the boarding houses are usually calm. This allows pupils to focus on their learning and on developing positive relationships with friends and staff.

Pupils undertake work on the impact of harmful sexual behaviour. This work is woven into different aspects of the curriculum and care that pupils receive. It is valued by both girls and boys in the school. Some incidents continue to occur, including those that are being investigated by the police. This means that more time is required before the impact of this work can be fully evaluated.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers is inadequate because of the shortfalls in safeguarding arrangements identified above. Leaders do not accept responsibility readily for the harm experienced by pupils in their care.

Leaders do not consistently follow statutory guidance. A former member of staff was dismissed for gross misconduct. Leaders did not report this to the statutory agencies as required. As a result of this failure, leaders cannot be certain that the former member of staff is not currently employed in regulated activity.

Leaders arrange regular meetings to discuss pupils' progress. Academic and pastoral staff attend these meetings. Staff report that levels of communication about pupils' progress have improved in recent months. However, leaders do not understand that some pupils' complex needs, including SEND, increase their vulnerabilities. Consequently, they do not act in a timely manner to reduce risk.

Staff receive regular reviews of their boarding practice from staff who are suitably experienced. New staff have an induction programme that helps them to understand their responsibilities. Staff are provided with a range of training that supports their care of pupils. However, staff do not receive targeted learning about the level of care that some pupils with SEND require.

Leaders respond well to the challenges presented by COVID-19. Pupils are reminded to wear masks when required and they do so. Pupils are cared for in the on-site infirmary if they become ill. This reduces disruption for affected pupils and means that others are kept safe.

Several new trustees have been appointed recently. Many new trustees have no former connection to the school. The new trustees have a wide range of relevant skills and experience. However, it is too early to judge the effectiveness of the new trustees.

## **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:

- Staff must ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school. In particular, that arrangements are made to keep pupils safe, when there are known or potential risks, taking into account pupils' individual needs. (Boarding schools: national minimum standards 11.1)
- The school's leadership and management must demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role. (Boarding schools: national minimum standards 13.3)
- The school's leadership and management must consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met. (Boarding schools: national minimum standards 13.4)
- Staff members should receive opportunities for training, so that they understand and meet the particular needs of pupils in their care. (Boarding schools: national minimum standards 15.1)
- The school's leadership and management should ensure that staff supervising pupils outside teaching time are sufficient in number, training and experience for the age, number and needs of pupils, and the locations and activities involved. (Boarding schools: national minimum standards 15.3)
- There is a legal requirement for schools and colleges to make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service as soon as possible when an individual is removed from regulated activity. ('Keeping children safe in education 2021: statutory guidance for schools and colleges', Department for Education, paragraphs 329 and 331)

### **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people 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:** SC007916

**Headteacher:** Robin Dyer

**Type of school:** Boarding school

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## **Inspectors**

Jane Titley, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Jamie Richardson, Social Care Inspector



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