

Mark College

Blackford Road, Mark, Highbridge, Somerset TA9 4NP

Inspection dates

17–19 January 2017

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Sixth form provision	Inadequate
Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the residential provision	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leadership, management and governance of the school are inadequate because safeguarding requirements are not met.
- The proprietor and those responsible for governance do not check or monitor the work of senior leaders of the school robustly enough.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and protected and to provide for their welfare, health and safety is inadequate.
- The school's procedures to identify and manage potential risks and hazards, particularly those related to fire, are inadequate.
- Teaching is not consistently good. Teachers do not plan work that builds on what pupils already know, understand and can do. In addition, they do not take pupils' individual special educational needs sufficiently into account. As a result, pupils do not make good progress in developing their subject knowledge and skills across the curriculum.

The school has the following strengths

- Therapists working closely with pupils help them develop independent living skills.
- Pupils' reading skills are improving. They are reading for pleasure more often.
- It is 'all right to be different' at this school because pupils accept each other for who they are.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- The curriculum in the sixth form and the relationship with local colleges help students, including the most able, to achieve well.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership, management and governance of the school and boarding provision by:
 - immediately ensuring that the safeguarding and health and safety issues identified in the unmet standards are remedied
 - ensuring that staff safeguarding training is up to date and recorded accurately
 - ensuring that the proprietor and those responsible for governance hold the school leaders more firmly to account and monitor the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation
 - improving the quality of record keeping and sharing of information throughout the school, residential provision and maintenance department.
- Improve the outcomes for pupils, so that all pupils make at least good progress from their starting points by ensuring that:
 - all teachers can better manage pupils' behaviour so that any inappropriate behaviour is quickly and efficiently tackled and stopped
 - teaching takes full account of the individual's special educational needs, including any barriers to learning
 - more attention is paid to developing pupils' correct use of spellings, punctuation and grammar across the curriculum
 - teachers have accurate information about what pupils know, understand and can do and use this to inform their planning and subsequent teaching.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that:
 - all sanctions are fully recorded and evaluated for their effectiveness
 - students have more help to stop them smoking
 - pupils and students have external, impartial careers advice.
- Improve the residential provision by ensuring that:
 - all children and young people are provided with good-quality mattresses for their beds
 - the cause of what appears to be damp in a child's bedroom is investigated, and appropriate action taken.

The school must meet the following independent school standards

- The proprietor must ensure that pupils receiving secondary education have access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that:
 - is presented in an impartial manner
 - enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and

- helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential (paragraphs 2(2), 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii) and 2(2)(e)(iii)).
- The proprietor must ensure that the teaching at the school:
 - enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught
 - involves well-planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time
 - shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainment of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons
 - demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress
 - utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly (paragraphs 3, 3(a), 3(c), 3(d), 3(g) and 3(h)).
- The proprietor must ensure that arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraphs 7, 7(a) and 7(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders while they are accommodated at the school and have regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools (paragraphs 8, 8(a) and 8(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy (paragraph 11).
- The proprietor must ensure compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (paragraph 12).
- The proprietor must ensure that pupils are properly supervised through the appropriate deployment of school staff (paragraph 14).
- The proprietor must ensure that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 15).
- The proprietor must ensure 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 (paragraphs 16, 16(a) and 16(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure the suitability of persons appointed as members of staff at the school, other than the proprietor and supply staff, by ensuring that:
 - in the case of any person for whom, by reason of that person living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, obtaining an enhanced criminal record check is not sufficient to establish the person's suitability to work in a school, such further checks are made as the proprietor considers appropriate, having regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State; and

- in the case of any person for whom, by reason of that person living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, obtaining such a certificate is not sufficient to establish the person's suitability to work in a school, such further checks are made as the proprietor considers appropriate, having regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State; and
 - in the case of staff who care for, train, supervise or are in charge of boarders, in addition to the matters specified in paragraphs (a) to (e), the proprietor checks that Standard 14 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools or, where applicable, Standard 14 of the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools, is complied with, and in the light of the information from the checks referred to in paragraphs (c) to (f), the proprietor considers that the person is suitable for the position to which the person is appointed
 - the checks referred to in sub-paragraphs (2)(c) and (except where sub-paragraph (4) applies) (2)(e) must be completed before a person's appointment (paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(e), 18(2)(f) and 18(3)).
- The proprietor must ensure that a person offered for supply by an employment business to the school only begins to work at the school if the proprietor has received written notification from the employment business in relation to that person and that:
- the checks referred to in paragraph 21(3)(a)(i) to (iv), (vii) and (b) have been made to the extent relevant to that person
 - where relevant to that person, an enhanced criminal record check has been made and that it or another employment business has obtained an enhanced criminal record certificate in response to such a check; and
 - if the employment business has obtained such a certificate before the person is due to begin work at the school, whether it disclosed any matter or information; and
 - [the proprietor has received] a copy of any enhanced criminal record certificate obtained by an employment business before the person is due to begin work at the school
 - a person offered for supply by an employment business only begins work at the school if the proprietor considers that the person is suitable for the work for which the person is supplied
 - before a person offered for supply by an employment business begins work at the school the person's identity is checked by the proprietor of the school (irrespective of any such check carried out by the employment business before the person was offered for supply)
 - the proprietor, in the contract or other arrangements which the proprietor makes with any employment business, requires the employment business to provide the notification referred to in paragraph (a)(i); and
 - [the proprietor has received] a copy of any enhanced criminal record certificate which the employment business obtains, in respect of any person whom the employment business supplies to the school; and
 - except for those persons to whom sub-paragraph (4) applies, in the case of supply staff who care for, train, supervise or are in charge of boarders, the proprietor checks

that the relevant parts of Standard 14 of the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools are complied with

- except in the case of a person to whom sub-paragraph (4) applies, the certificate referred to in sub-paragraph (2)(a)(i)(bb) must have been obtained not more than 3 months before the date on which the person is due to begin work at the school (paragraphs 19(2), 19(2)(a), 19(2)(a)(i), 19(2)(a)(i)(aa), 19(2)(a)(i)(bb), 19(2)(a)(i)(cc), 19(2)(a)(ii), 19(2)(b), 19(2)(c), 19(2)(d), 19(2)(d)(i), 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(2)(e) and 19(3)).
- The proprietor must keep a register which shows that all of the required and relevant information is recorded for:
 - each member of staff appointed on or after 1 May 2007, whether a check was made pursuant to paragraph 18(2)(e), including the date on which each such check was completed or the certificate obtained
 - in relation to supply staff, whether written notification has been received from the employment business that checks corresponding to those referred to in sub-paragraph (3)(a)(i) to (iv), (vi) and (vii) have been made to the extent relevant to any such person; and
 - an enhanced criminal record check has been made and that it or another employment business has obtained an enhanced criminal record certificate in response to such a check, together with the date the written notification that each such check was made, or certificate obtained, was received; and
 - whether a check has been made in accordance with paragraph 19(2)(e) together with the date the check was completed; and
 - where written notification has been received from the employment business in accordance with a contract or other arrangements referred to in paragraph 19(2)(d) that it has obtained an enhanced criminal record certificate, whether the employment business supplied a copy of the certificate to the school (paragraphs 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(5), 21(5)(a), 21(5)(a)(i), 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(b) and 21(5)(c)).
- The proprietor must ensure that the temperature of hot water at the point of use does not pose a scalding risk to users (paragraphs 28(1) and 28(1)(d)).
- The proprietor must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school:
 - demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently
 - fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently
 - actively promote the well-being of pupils as defined within the meaning of section 10(2) of the Children Act 2004 (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)).

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools

- The school has, and implements effectively, appropriate policies for the care of children who are unwell, and ensures that children’s physical and mental health and emotional well-being is promoted. These include first aid, care of those with chronic conditions and

disabilities, administration of medicines (including controlled drugs) and dealing with medical emergencies. Policies for administration of medication should reflect guidance provided by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (Handling of Medicines in Social Care) (NMS 3.6).

- The school premises, accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of children are ensured (NMS 6.2).
- The school complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (NMS 7.1).
- The school ensures that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (NMS 11.1).
- Methods to de-escalate confrontations or potentially challenging behaviour are used wherever appropriate to avoid use of restraint, including reasonable force. Restraint, including reasonable force, is only used in exceptional circumstances, to prevent injury to any person, including the child, or to prevent serious damage to the property of any person, including the child's, or to prevent the child leaving the school's premises where this may lead to the child injuring themselves or others (NMS 12.4).
- All children and staff are given an opportunity to discuss with a relevant adult (who was not directly involved) within 24 hours of incidents of restraint, including reasonable force, they have been involved in, witnessed or been affected by (NMS 12.5).
- A written record is kept of major sanctions and the use of any reasonable force. Records include the information in Appendix 2 (use of reasonable force). The record is made within 24 hours and is legible. Children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records. The school regularly reviews any instances of the use of reasonable force and examines trends or issues to enable staff to reflect and learn in a way that will inform future practice (NMS 12.6).
- The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met (NMS 13.4).
- The school's leadership and management actively promote the well-being of pupils (NMS 13.5).
- The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate (NMS 13.8).
- Schools operate safe recruitment and adopt recruitment procedures in line with the regulatory requirements and having regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State (NMS 14.1).
- The head teacher (or school equivalent), governing body, trustees, partnership or organisation responsible for carrying on the school carries out, and records in writing, once each year:
 - a review of the operation and resourcing of the school's welfare provision for boarding pupils, in relation to:
 - its Statement of Purpose;
 - its staffing policy;

- the placement plans for individual children; and
 - an internal assessment of its compliance with these standards (NMS 20.4).
- The school produces a written placement plan, agreed as far as is practicable with the child, the child’s parents/carers and any placing authority for the child, unless the information is held elsewhere such as in the child’s statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plan. The placement plan identifies the needs of that child that the school should meet and specifies how the school will care for the child and promote their welfare on a day to day basis. Where significant changes are made to the placement plan there is appropriate consultation. Where applicable the plan is consistent with the care plan of the placing authority for any child placed by a local authority. The placement plan is regularly reviewed and amended as necessary to reflect significant changes in the child’s needs or progress in his or her development. Where feasible, children in the school are aware of the content of their placement plans, and confirm that the school is providing care for them that is consistent with the plans (NMS 21.1).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers in the residential provision	Inadequate
How well children and young people are protected in the residential provision	Inadequate

- The proprietor, leaders, managers and those responsible for governance have not ensured that the school meets all of the independent school standards. They have also failed to ensure that the national minimum standards for residential special schools are met. As a result, leaders' evaluation of the school is too generous and does not accurately identify the school's weaknesses.
- There are widespread failures to ensure that children and young people's safety and well-being are promoted. These include matters relating to safeguarding, staff recruitment, health, safety and the use of physical restraint. Record keeping is poor and the sharing of information is weak. Clear and concise records are not maintained in respect of the use of restraint, sanctions and records relating to staff recruitment.
- The school's leaders do not focus strongly enough on the progress pupils make from their individual starting points. They do not check frequently, or well enough, on the achievement of the different groups of pupils.
- The school's curriculum covers a suitable range of subjects at appropriate levels for the pupils' abilities. Changes have been made to increase the opportunities for pupils to take different mathematics and English courses in addition to GCSEs. This is enabling students to be able to get qualifications that will help them to achieve better than in the past. The range of extra-curricular activities provided by the school effectively complements the lessons pupils take and courses followed by students.
- Staff are strongly challenged to improve their work when it is poor. For example, where in the recent past teaching has been weak, leaders have taken swift action. Teaching, learning and pupils' achievements are now improving as a result.
- Senior leaders are good at defusing potential aggressive reactions from pupils. Their calm yet purposeful approach sets good boundaries and guidelines, which pupils then follow. However, this approach is not consistently applied by all teaching staff.
- Good-quality training about preventing radicalisation and extremism has enabled leaders and managers to be able to take robust action if needed. The local 'Prevent' duty team has praised the work of the school's staff in their ability to identify pupils potentially at risk from extremist behaviour.

Governance

- Governance is inadequate. Governors have not ensured that the school's procedures for the safeguarding, welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff are fit for purpose. Safeguarding procedures are not adequately reviewed and evaluated by senior leaders and governors. As a result, safeguarding is ineffective. Governors have not ensured that appropriate risk assessments are in place and correctly applied. Governors do not always

receive information from leaders that helps them challenge leaders' assertions about the quality of the school's work, particularly those related to pupils' academic progress.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective. The welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff have been compromised.
- The proprietor, leaders and those responsible for governance do not ensure that there is sufficiently good oversight and monitoring of the school's recruitment and vetting process. The procedures do not follow the latest published guidance from the Secretary of State for Education on the requirements for safer recruitment. The single central register does not contain all of the required information, for example, with respect to the vetting of supply staff. This places children and young people at risk.
- Risk assessments are not appropriately reviewed and for some important aspects they have not been created. This means that potential high risks are not identified and reduced, for example relating to fire safety.
- Not all staff have up-to-date training in courses relating to health, safety and safeguarding. The school cannot demonstrate that all staff have read part 1 of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (September 2016), as required by the Department for Education.
- The school has an appropriate safeguarding policy on its website. However, it and other, related policies are not always implemented correctly by staff. Where senior leaders have been aware of the lack of due diligence by staff, they have taken appropriate action and alerted the appropriate authorities. At times, however, the response of senior leaders has been too slow. The school's admission register does not meet requirements because it does not include all the required information. Attendance registers are not completed in the required manner.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers do not consistently provide challenging activities that meet pupils' learning needs. Some of the activities are too repetitive or do not provide adequate challenge for the most able pupils. As a result, for some pupils work is too hard and for others it is too easy.
- Although pupils gain new skills and increase their understanding in the subjects taught, they do not make consistently good progress. This is because teachers do not take enough account of pupils' individual starting points.
- The behaviour of a few pupils is not effectively managed by some staff. Training to help staff develop their de-escalation skills has not helped these staff to deal with inappropriate behaviour quickly and effectively. As a result, these staff require the assistance of senior leaders to intervene and some have become over-reliant on calling for help from senior leaders when pupils start to misbehave.
- Many teachers use their good subject knowledge to prepare lessons that engage pupils in their learning. However, in some subjects, teachers do not ensure that pupils fully understand the activity or accurately assess the quality of pupils' work.

- Teachers do not routinely encourage pupils to apply their knowledge and skills across the curriculum. In English lessons, pupils are shown and told how to improve their work. Because they have a clear understanding, and know what to improve, pupils then act upon the teacher's advice and learn from their previous mistakes. However, in other subjects, pupils' spellings, punctuation and grammar are not routinely addressed, so pupils make errors and too often repeat the same mistakes.
- Teachers ensure the good promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity. Teachers and other adults help pupils who are anxious so that they can more easily join in all activities with their classmates.
- Practical activities in design and technology, along with those in art and design, help to effectively develop pupils' creativity. In these subjects, pupils also gain experience in using a good range of equipment. They learn how to share resources and use sharp and potentially dangerous equipment safely and responsibly.
- Therapists are highly effective in identifying the needs of pupils and provide good-quality reports to support pupils' annual reviews. Although their roles are in the early stages of development, they are beginning to provide greater support for teaching staff. They are helping them to better understand the barriers individual pupils face.
- The school is in the process of using a new framework for assessing pupils' work. Not all staff are currently using it to best effect.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate. Statutory safeguarding, welfare, health and safety requirements are not met. Recruitment processes are not thorough enough.
- A clearly written health and safety policy exists. However, it is not always effectively implemented. Risk assessments do not cover all the areas that they should and do not reflect current practice in the school.
- Too much reliance is placed on the reliability of students signing in and signing out for themselves. Records are checked to ensure that pupils who receive some of their education at the local further education colleges have arrived and returned safely. Good communication with the colleges ensures that the school has accurate records of punctuality and attendance. However, the school cannot demonstrate that it knows where students are when they leave the site for other purposes, for example to smoke.
- Leaders and managers have failed to ensure clear and concise record keeping when physical restraint has been used. Records do not fully explain what has occurred during the incident of restraint. This includes the type and duration of the restraint used. In addition, records do not contain a full account of the views of the young people involved.
- In some classrooms, the water supply to the sinks is too hot.
- Careers guidance is provided by the school in conjunction with the colleges, parents and young people. However, the school does not ensure that pupils have the opportunity to receive external and impartial careers advice.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. More of the pupils currently in the school, particularly younger pupils, have challenging behaviour than in previous years. The behaviour of a few pupils is not effectively managed by some staff. The impact of training to help staff develop their de-escalation skills has not helped these staff members to deal with inappropriate behaviour early enough to halt it.
- Pupils' behaviour out of lessons is not as good as it is in lessons. They engage in name-calling, which can distress some pupils. The school is now recording more of these incidents in the behaviour and sanctions logs. However, it is not yet possible for leaders or managers to easily spot the patterns of behaviour during the day or over time. The school is due to implement a better method of recording and interpreting this kind of information.
- Pupils' behaviour generally improves as they get older, although there are peaks and troughs at times of anxiety due to their special educational needs. Pupils are polite and respectful to adults around the school and learn to willingly share apparatus and equipment in lessons.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted and developed through a wide range of school activities. Opportunities for prayer and worship are provided and observance of religious practice is supported well, for example through the use of a dedicated prayer room. The 'afternoon tea' where pupils provide the catering, along with charity work, prepare pupils well in their understanding of service to others. School and other council opportunities enable pupils to develop leadership and other personal skills. Good relationships with the local church and visits to local landmarks, such as Glastonbury Tor, assist pupils and students to be part of the local community. Pupils have a good understanding of life in modern Britain and their role in it.
- Pupils indicate that they feel safe. They also told inspectors that it is 'all right to be different' at this school because they are respected for who they are.
- Attendance overall is below average. Where there is persistent absence by a pupil or student, school staff involve other agencies and provide support for families so that attendance improves.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Poor quality of teaching in the recent past, particularly in English and mathematics, has had a negative impact on the progress pupils made. However, leaders have identified this and improvements can clearly be seen in pupils' work in the last four months, most notably in English.
- While improving steadily, not enough pupils make good progress in their learning because teaching is still not consistently good across a wide range of subjects. This is because teachers do not make the best use of assessment information to provide activities that quickly build pupils' knowledge and skills.
- Throughout the school, the analysis of pupils' performance has not, until recently, identified different groups of pupils. Although it is accepted that boarders have done better than day pupils in the past, school leaders have not determined for themselves that

this is still the case. Cohort sizes are very small and, due to the changing range of abilities and special educational needs of the pupils, cohorts are difficult to compare. However, more could be done to identify those pupils who are not making the progress of which they are capable.

- In 2016, at the end of key stage 4, standards were lower than they had been in previous years. This was due to the inconsistent quality of teaching and the choices of subjects followed for some pupils.
- Pupils' willingness and ability to read in lessons, and for pleasure, have increased since September 2016. Close work with speech and language therapists supports pupils to develop good speech and communication skills. Pupils are increasingly articulate and can share their thoughts, making their desires and needs known.
- Pupils' emotional well-being is strongly supported. The hard work of staff, assisted by the curriculum, helps to improve pupils' independent living skills. Speech and language therapy, art therapy and occupational therapy are used well to develop pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem. The school's work to reduce pupils' anxiety is well developed. It enables pupils and students to continue to further education or training courses, and enter the world of work.

Sixth form provision

Inadequate

- Overall, the provision for young people is inadequate because safeguarding is not effective. Some students in the sixth form take part in community sporting events where the arrangements for their safety and well-being are not strong.
- The school is a non-smoking site. Some students smoke cigarettes and/or use smoking vaporisers. Those who can legally smoke reported to inspectors that they are not sure where they can do this safely off site during the school day. During the inspection, some were seen smoking on the school site. Although appropriate action was taken by senior leaders, the school does not do enough to help students to stop smoking.
- Strong relationships with two local colleges provide the students with a wider ranging curriculum than would otherwise be available. Courses available to students at school and college include BTEC qualifications, GCSEs, Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (COPE) and entry-level qualifications. In addition, many students successfully undertake A-level courses.
- Daily communication between the school and the local further education colleges helps to support students' learning. When in college, students are accompanied by school staff. The school reviews annually the service level agreements between the college and the school and appropriately holds leaders to account for students' progress in the college.
- The most able students make at least good progress from their starting points. Students who do not achieve pass grades in English or mathematics at GCSE have the opportunity to re-sit examinations or undertake other recognised and suitable courses.
- The arrangements in place to support students' next steps when they leave the sixth form are generally well considered and take note of their views, desires and needs. Students have appropriate experiences of the world of work. The most able students are able to go on to undertake higher level courses at college, university or through apprenticeships.

However, the school does not ensure that students have the opportunity to have external impartial careers advice.

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the residential provision

Inadequate

- Leaders and managers have failed to safeguard and promote children's and young people's welfare. There are widespread failures in adherence to the national minimum standards. These failures place young people at significant risk of harm.
- Safeguarding records are inadequate. They do not consistently contain a comprehensive record of all work undertaken as part of an investigation, whether this be an internal investigation, or that carried out by external agencies. In addition, there is a lack of evidence as to what is being done to prevent a reoccurrence of events.
- Children and young people are not protected by leaders' and managers' selection and staff recruitment process. This includes ensuring that satisfactory information and documentation are obtained prior to appointment, such as employment references, additional checks for overseas applicants and a complete employment history. In addition, there is no effective management oversight of these processes, or of the records.
- Leaders and managers have failed to ensure that the residential environment is safe. Fire safety is not effectively promoted. For example, a number of fire doors do not close correctly, and some are being wedged open.
- Prompt action is not always taken to alert the emergency services when needed. However, appropriate agencies and authorities are kept informed when serious events and incidents take place.

Quality of care and support in the residential provision

Requires improvement

- Placement plans do not provide staff with clear strategies to meet children's and young people's individual needs. The plans lack evidence of the progress that they are making. In addition, they do not reflect the input and outcomes of the support that is being provided, including the support from therapy services.
- Children and young people say that their views are listened to, and are acted upon. Leaders and managers have ensured that surveys have been conducted to seek their views of the provision of meals. On the whole, children and young people enjoy the meals that are provided.
- Children and young people say that they enjoy staying in the residential provision. Leaders and managers ensure that they are provided with a wide range of social and leisure activities.
- Most of the residential provision is presented in a homely, child-friendly manner. Leaders and managers have identified where further improvements are required. However, some children said that they consider that their bed mattresses need replacing as they are uncomfortable to sleep on.
- Children and young people say that they like their bedrooms and they are personalised to reflect their individual likes and preferences. However, one child's bedroom has an area that appears to be damp.

School details

Unique reference number	123933
Social care unique reference number	SC033024
DfE registration number	933/6185
Inspection number	10025565

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 category	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	10 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of students in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	77
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	17
Number of boarders on roll	35
Proprietor	Priory Education and Children's Services Ltd
Chair	Sophie Garner
Headteacher	Chris Sweeney
Annual fees (day pupils)	£20,543 to £65,543
Annual fees (boarders)	£27,926 to £74,028
Telephone number	01278 641632
Website	www.priorychildrensservices.co.uk/find-a-location/mark-college-somerset
Email address	markcollege@priorygroup.com
Date of previous inspection	23–25 September 2014

Information about this school

- Mark College is owned and operated by Priory Education and Children's Services Ltd, a national organisation which manages a number of health, social care and education settings.
- The school was registered in 1986 to provide education for up to 88 young people. It is a 38-week specialist day and residential special school for boys and girls aged 10 to 19 who have specific learning difficulties. These include language disorders, dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, dysgraphia, and/or autism spectrum disorder and related disorders.
- The college has three purpose-built boarding houses located together in the centre of the site. Two new flats are also used to promote semi-independent living for older young people.
- The school is ethnically diverse, with around 15% of students coming from overseas. Many pupils have struggled with maintained settings in the past and are often anxious or phobic about attending school. There are very few pupils in Years 6 and 14.
- The school does not use alternative providers. However, with adult support, post-16 students can access two local further education colleges, Strode and Weston, which provide a wide range of courses in a mainstream setting.
- The previous integrated inspection of the school and residential provision was undertaken on 23 to 25 September 2014, when the provision was judged to be good.
- The previous inspection of the residential provision was undertaken on 6 to 10 October 2015, when the provision was judged to be good.
- The school seeks to raise pupils' self-esteem through promoting their academic and sporting achievement.

Information about this inspection

- The previous integrated education and residential provision inspection was conducted in September 2014, when the school was judged to be good. The previous residential inspection was conducted in October 2015, when it was judged to be good.
- The inspector observed lessons, including joint observations with the headteacher. The inspectors checked the school's compliance with the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards'), the national minimum standards for boarding schools and associated requirements.
- The inspection team looked at pupils' and students' work, talked with them about their studies and reviewed records of their progress and achievement.
- The Ofsted survey responses from 24 members of staff were taken into account, as were the responses from 25 parents to the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, and an email from a parent.
- The inspectors held discussions with a range of school staff, including the principal, subject leaders, members of the administrative and support staff and members of the Priory Group senior central team. In addition, they met with those responsible for welfare and boarding, and boarding staff.

Inspection team

Steffi Penny, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Kidner

Social Care Regulatory Inspector

Wendy Anderson

Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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